A

STATESMAN'S LOVE

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"I will be counselled by you."

A STATESMAN'S LOVE.

"My friend, when you love, let it be a woman whom you can love for ever."—BALZAC.

BY ÉMILE BOUCHER.

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO.,
LOVELL'S COURT, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1886

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PREFACE.

In writing "A Statesman's Love," the Author has endeavoured to show that the alchemist-like transfiguration supposed to be wrought in our whole nature by that passion, has no existence in fact.

Love cannot be bribed or blinded to take as its equivalent anything less than itself. Affection, Admiration, Friendship—the triune feelings that so often usurp its name—can never stand before that equality of heart and mind, that union of soul and spirit that alone constitute Love.

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

In this is no change as by a magic wand, but the fulfilment of Destiny.

A STATESMAN'S LOVE.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

"The rift where the rose perished."

My uncle was an old Scotch steward on the estate of Sir Burleigh Clifford—an English Manor N.E. by north—yet sufficiently remote from the borders of Scotland to keep us free from the complications of discord introduced by the two kings—*de jure* and *de facto*—the Guelph and the Stuart.

We had come from the misty glens and savage solitudes of the Trossachs, lured to the southward by hope, as hungry eagles are lured from their eyries by famine, and, our wings well clipped, we remained, year by year the tradition of our freedom fading, the fact of our thraldom more certain. We had a feuar or prescriptive right to serve the Cliffords, which doubtless,

analysed, would have been found a faithful mind to serve ourselves, as pigmies in a storm might have kept to the shelter of a crag, or pigs in autumn battened on the acorns and beechmast of the Clifford woods; but we neither analysed nor conjectured.

"Whatever things cows be,"

like Mercury in the Homeric story, we drove them to our own profit with disguised foot-prints, nor ever forgot the relative positions of feuar and feudatory, derived from some long-ago intermarriage of a Clifford with the chief of our clan.

It was, in fact, my uncle M'Causland's sixth sense—the sense of the relative positions of himself and the Cliffords. He could not afford them the unlimited obedience of a clansman, being southrons; nor deny them unlimited homage for their power, great wealth, and high position. The proud and rugged Highland crofter had, at first, hard work to bow to a southron's will; once reconciled to its necessity, its importance grew with him. To his clan's chief, obedience had been carelessly rendered as one breathes unconsciously; to this southron, it was given with all the extra observance of formality—an observance which, nourished, nursed, and licked into shape, as bears are said

to lick their young, after some years at the Manor, died, was embalmed, and given as a mummy into my charge, while M'Causland forgot all about it himself, taking high ground with Sir Burleigh, who was old and stubborn, and content, having received our homage and being assured of our fealty and allegiance, to meet his steward, M'Causland, on the neutral ground of age and obstinacy.

M'Causland had taken me in, in my outcast childhood, a living relic, it was surmised, of some Border feud, when on a mission for Sir Burleigh to Scotland. My origin, hidden as by the grey northern mists by an ascribed relationship for eighteen years before, Sir Burleigh, less old but more obstinate, was no person to be trifled with or to tolerate a nameless wean.

Unmarried himself, M'Causland, a dry sceptical woman-hater like his master, I must have suffered unconsciously, in my nonage, many an injurious commentary, and as unconsciously assumed an impassive, never-moved aspect which, growing with my growth, strengthening with use of years, concealed without hypocrisy the life and levity of youth usual with my sex, which might, displayed, have offended my stern guardians. For, as in the rest, so in this, I was theirs, not M'Causland's alone, but accounted as

would have been a pig or a sheep, a tree, a stock, or a stone, as something pertaining to the Manor.

The Trossachs were but a tradition to me. I knew no other home than the Home Farm. A druidess of the Clifford woods, I could not affirm that oaks grew elsewhere. The vast and wild park, with its oak forests, its long glades, silent in summer, desolate in winter; the large Hall, terraced and lonely in its midst, was my world—other I deemed not of nor desired. To its inhabitants, I was only "Helen Rohan," a dual name always addressed to me in assertion, interrogation, or remark.

I was brought up usefully, to knit, write, and cast accounts, free from all other duties; our old housekeeper, autocratically rejecting aid which might have developed into rivalry, left me to the more congenial work of accountant-general of the Manor, and keeper both of its financial and other records—a fixed idea of M'Causland's being, that to write a thing down at the time it happened, was a sort of statute-law, and proof of its having happened precisely as 'twas set forth, which could neither be contradicted nor set aside.

This was Manor-law, and worked in well enough with habitual despotism in all disputed cases on the estate—for there were many outly-

ing farms at long distances—land, both glebe and arable, marsh and meadow, fisheries and forests, all whose affairs were conducted by master and steward, with me as scribe, tempered by no appeal to outside tribunals.

At eighteen, I was still spoken of as "Only Helen Rohan" by my uncle, by my red-headed cousin Alexis, by Sir Burleigh, and by his nephew and heir, Verney, Viscount Clifford, an orphan of a younger, poorer, yet ennobled branch of the family.

"A Nell-Gwynne-descended bastard," Sir Burleigh sometimes called him.

One day, when about nine years old, I asked Verney Clifford what this meant, treasuring up the sounds as so much Greek, to be repeated until perfect.

Verney was then a collegian, spending vacation at the Manor, and had, as he often did, recklessly offended Sir Burleigh, who always caustically charged his faults to this mysterious cause, which aroused my curiosity. It was the first and last direct personal question I ever put, for he answered by setting a mastiff-pup at me, which tore my frock to tatters, and, but for youth, inexperience, and a certain amount of cub-like good-nature (for which he kicked it), might have seriously torn my flesh too.

Verney Clifford was just fifteen years older than me, but we were friends from the beginning, and, as the reviling of his uncle had been Greek to me, so also was the bitter hate the tenants bore him. To me, he seemed gay, gallant, and *débonnair*, free of speech (not always of the civillest), caustic, clever and reckless, a spendthrift (so I heard) and a gambler when in London, yet always apparently content with the Manor. I had then no clear notion of the scandalous chronicle kept against him in the countryside, and no enlightener on it. By force of circumstances, I had no female companionship: our chief domestic, Elsie, was deaf and puritanical—by turns hating me as an interloper, and loving me as a child who had grown up before her eyes, yet with distant respect. There was not in our household the usual easy intimacy of country-life. For the farmers, we were too "sib" with the Cliffords to be safe gossips; for ourselves, we had our northern coldness and inaccessibility. Thus, in a household of men, Lord Clifford's character escaped that minute dissection, that keen analysis, which would at once have informed me of his misdeeds, and lost me my friend. If it be true, as Milton affirms, that

"Fame hath two wings—one black, the other white,"

it was equally certain that his name was written with the very blackest pen-feather of her sable wing, o'ergilded to me by our long acquaintance, and the fact of his presence at the farm being so usual and so familiar as to excite no comment. Into our parlour—a long, low, spacious room, well furnished, with its solid carved oak, high mantel and stiff tapestry table-cover which reached the polished floor—even our suzerain and sovereign, Sir Burleigh, was a frequent visitor—frequent enough to be unremarked in his comings and goings by the household, still more Milord Verney. Yet my uncle feared him, and the first direct praise ever he gave me was for being, as he termed it, "crafty Carline eneuch to hand a candle to Verney Clifford to licht him awa frae mischief"—a free adaptation of the homely proverb "Hold a candle to the devil," which I had heard as a child, and, not understanding it as allegorical, had speculated abstrusely as to how near or remote in such contiguity lay safety. Would he thank you, or growl as Sir Burleigh did at small services rendered? Would the grease drip with excessive heat? and how long would a candle under such circumstances last?

Would the trembling acolyte be allowed to go at the last flicker of the snuff, and would

it be etiquette to retire backward—or even, as a matter of safety, would it not be better to do so?

Pshaw! what a little praise served for the other job after long realistic childish musings on the first! To hand a candle to Verney Clifford, whom I had known from my fourth year.

What was it to me, when his great tawny head looked in at the door, that it had been a mark for a poacher's gun—that the poacher was a tenant whose sister had "gone-away"? In my utter ignorance of the reality of evil as opposed to its theory, I even felt aggrieved for Verney. It was *his* estate, I would mutter mutinously. The Stubbs were *his* tenants. No Circassian, trained amid pure surroundings to think well of a sultan, had fewer inclinations to evildoing than I; but I was a Circassian amid the snows of my life and its guarded circumstances, while wild Verney was a sultan.

How was I to regard him? Truth to tell, no casuistry came in to destroy the directness and simplicity of our friendship, and M'Causland's praise I pondered, but could not appropriate. So my relations to the libertine heir were those of sincere and faithful envy, friendship, and fraternity.

I have now only to introduce my cousin Alexis M'Causland.

He was tall, Highland, red-headed, shy, and, for present mistress, hugged "Cæsar's Commentaries" in Latin.

I believe he studied them when alone, for he would repeat passages aloud about the Gallic legions; but his interest in the bald first Cæsar was divided ever since he had passed his sixth foot in height. Verney Clifford had come in for closer and less favourable scrutiny from him. As though like a snail, he (Alexis) had with his increased stature also grown horns with eyes on them to spy out deficiencies in smaller folk. He had a handsome but somewhat sullen face, like those on ragged old medals with "Tiberius Imp." or "Maximin: Imperator"—such as were in drawers at Burleigh Hall—collections by long-past Cliffords.

Neither Sir Burleigh nor Clifford had noticed him much as a boy;—as a stripling, only to laugh at his rapid growth, his mingled shyness and dignity.

Now, it seemed to me, Clifford's glance was sharper—his voice, though more acrid, smoother when he spoke to Alexis.

It was rarely any words passed between them, but a dislike seemed to exist under a surface-calm, and, at every fresh instance of Verney's wrongdoing, Alexis ranged himself with his

judges and accusers, though with the cool and temperate judgment of his nation and position, rather than the eager outspokenness of youth.

The elder M'Causland never wearied preaching submission.

The younger practised it on compulsion and from clanship.

Every day is like another, yet every day has its incidents which go to make up the thing we call life. Every day I had to sit at a desk entering sales, drawing bills, and setting down agreements between tenant and landlord, verbatim from M'Causland's lips. The other side might keep their account of such transactions how they pleased, but disputes were always settled by reference to ours, which M'Causland and Sir Burleigh agreed to regard as infallible, unless they wished to alter them. These being sometimes of the lengthiest by interpellations, and an insistance on length regarded as a solid proof of strength, it often happened that whole dialogues were inserted which made much reading over and revision necessary. No special ledger was kept for figures : they were neatly interspersed as sales or payments occurred, and served as illustrations to the text—lightening and brightening the words.

Thus was I, in some degree, historian to the

Manor—and knew, to a turn, all its complex affairs. I had put down my last figure, a nought, in the ledger and written "Fame" in German text on the calfskin-cover, embellishing it with rays of blackness, for (I thought) I must be intellectually famous, or my life will be a false and hollow fraud, a failure and a deceit. This was I doing when my cousin Alexis entered with a white rose.

To do the man justice, he was not aware of the "affrachement" of his aspect as he bent his red head over the desk and made his floral offering, but no one in the household ever troubled to do him justice—mercy sometimes, as at the end of an imperial secptre; everyday justice, never.

I took the rose:—the deep heart of it glowed, the soul of the thing came forth in delicatest perfume, every perfect leaf called for praise: a pang woke in my heart as its perishable loveliness struck mine eye—such was I not—such could I never be.

"You're a rose!" said Alexis.

His voice smote my ear, but not my sense. I continued gazing. All the perishable things of the earth floated by me, and far above them a wreath of amaranth shone. I stretched out my hand: the fingers unclasped. The rose fell into

a red rift in the logs:—a vapoury breath—it was gone.

"De'il tak' ye, Helen Rohan!" exclaimed Alexis, aghast. "It was aye a forced flower, graun under dung—ye deevil's dochter—an' ye cast it awa' to perish!"

"Had I not, my election were void, and flowers and frippery would be to me faithful unto the end." I spoke this less to him than to myself—to my thoughts—but Sandy gasped, and I awoke.

"What ha'e ye then chosen?"

I replied: "Fame."

"Fame!—eh?" he repeated, astonishment stirring his red hair—"Fame! That'll ne'er bring ye a good man's love, Helen Rohan—nor a leal heart!"—and he bent his long shanks, preparatory to proving that he himself was better than Fame, when he was interrupted by the entrance of Sir Burleigh Clifford and M'Causland, who adroitly, talking all the while of sheep, dislodged us from the hearth, leaving Alexis no resource but Highland dignity—on which, as on stilts, he retreated.

I was ordered to set down two items of farm interest:—

"Batesons paid for the roan filly, twelve pound seven shillings. Helen Rohan, from M'Causland.

"Denzils agreed to rent the four-acre marsh for grazing, at ten pounds a year. Helen Rohan, from Sir Burleigh."

Then the dull drift of their talk flowed on —my thoughts wandering away from it, even as I entered the payment and the agreement. Bateson's bargain might content him. The cows grazed on the marsh overpay Denzil's ten pounds a year. Yet what interest had either for me? I thought rather of a dead crow I had once found in the four-acre marsh, hidden in the stump of an old tree—a crow which had crept away to die by itself—lonely, and, perchance, misanthropic, all its glossy black feathers dull and lustreless, its head hanging limp and soft on one side, weary of all things—of sunrise, of dewy mists and purple clouds, of flight and noisy rejoicings over the beauty of summer-mornings.

When I looked up, the old men had gone—long since gone. The fire had dwindled to one red rift—

The rift where the rose perished.

I was roused from my reverie by Alexis M'Causland, who put his head in at the door to ask if Sir Burleigh were there.

His glance wandered to the hearth, as though hoping the old men might still be there, and was then directed to the dark brick-passage to

which the parlour opened rearward, as he said half-sullenly:

"Sir Burleigh has gone, milord."

"Then, by your leave, M'Causland, I'll wait here a bit for him."

As one who under protest admits a spy to a beleaguered fortress, so Alexis made way for Viscount Clifford, who came, in preceded by his unwilling vassal; and, establishing himself on the hearth, drew the logs together with his hunting-whip, whilst Alexis, with doleful and constrained hospitality, produced whiskey, some oatcake, and a glass, and, pushing them towards him,—a courtesy which was acknowledged by a nod—departed.

Clifford was a man over thirty, with a smooth tired voice, eyes dull yet penetrating, and a leonine mat of tawny hair and beard, not over tall, but something broad-chested.

"Here's to you, Helen Rohan!" he said, as he filled a glass; and, discovering me behind the tall desk, raised it after the manner of a toast.

"Here's what to me?" I inquired.

"A good husband," said milord, sipping. "Cæsar, his Commentaries!"

"If you *will*, Verney, I'll say 'Nell Gwynne,' I'm not afraid of Beech now."

"You may act Nell Gwynne for me," he replied, critically surveying the whiskey, "I'm not afraid of her now."

"You were though!"

"So also you of Beech:—ignorance on both sides. Now I'm Socratic—philosophic."

"Did Socrates dip his snub nose in whiskey?"

"Curse Socrates!"

"You invoked him."

"An old poisoner," muttered milord, wilfully, as was his wont, shutting his eyes to facts when displeased.

"Poisoned Xantippe, didn't he?" I enquired, cautiously peering through the bars of the desk, which was a sort of pulpit raised two steps from the floor.

"Yes! took care of Laïs though. Won't you come out, Helen Rohan? Seems to me you sit there and rule everybody with that ruler."

"Shall I get a crown of straws?"

"Long ago have recommended it," said Verney, "only you know so devilish well what you are about."

"Come, eat some oatcake, Verney. I made it."

"I'm going to. How is my uncle?"

"Very well."

"Come out, Helen Rohan!"

"To what end?" I said, sketching his face on the cover of the ledger.

"Oh! for the matter of that, I can do that," said Clifford tautologically, watching me.

"So you ought!" I said, as he stepped up beside me; and, taking his hand, I traced out its palm-lines with an old quill-pen, newly dipped in ink.

"What a horrid mess!" said Verney, unresisting. As I took the other hand, he dried the one on his tawny hair.

Just then Alexis came in, and must needs, in the sorrow of his heart, give a great sigh at sight of Clifford's close neighbourhood to the desk—as a schoolboy might at a lifelike presentment of the wolf and the lamb.

"What's that for?" said Clifford, the hate he habitually felt for all men intensified to scorn and bitterness by M'Causland's dependency and rivalry just evidenced.

"Bitter fa me when I gie ye account of every word," said Alexis with despondent energy. "Why do ye come here, Verney Clifford? Helen Rohan, be ashamed, ye fause-faced jade!"

This, though an unwonted development of feeling, we passed over; having long known it

to exist, its mere expression in words could not much move us.

We both knew that Alexis dared do no more than mutter vengeance ; and both, from different standpoints, somewhat despised him as he stood sullenly by the window watching us. Clifford departing soon to seek his uncle, we were left alone.

Not till then Alexis took up the well-bound Commentaries, disdaining words, yet glowering over the edge of his book till I spoke, resolved not to quarrel with him for his devotion.

"Sandy, you'll come a walk with me to-night?"

"Yes."

"And tell me about the Gallic legions?"

"Oh! my God!" (Aside.)

"What, Sandy?"

"Yes, Helen Rohan!" (Sullenly.)

"And wear your kilt, Sandy, and look like an old Roman?"

"I tell ye, Verney Clifford's eight years waur than me!" growled Sandy, ostentatiously ruffling the leaves of his book, thinking I referred to his age.

By this, our old deaf housekeeper was busy setting supper on the table, and soon found Sandy more laudable occupation than ruminating

vengeance on Verney, by setting him to cut bread. Presently, the elder M'Causland entered, rubbing his lean hands.

"Gude Lord!" he exclaimed profanely. "I met that cheat-the-noose, Verney Clifford. He looked as dark an' dour as though I were Sathanes. Ye ken I withstood the sale o' Denzil's farm, which was in his mind, to gamble awa the money in London, an' he's none pleased at it. Ay, speak him fair, Alexis as I bade ye. An' I'll engage it'll tak' twenty heirs to set Sir Burleigh against us."

"Our crafty Carline here, Helen Rohan—for all she looks like starched Queen Bess of the ruffles—I'll engage hands him a candle, to licht him awa' frae mischief. Eh, Helen Rohan?"

"Eh?" I repeated, offering him a poached egg.

"Is this egg to be blacked through the sauce-pan I hold being a-tilt?"

"Na! nae black," said M'Causland, hastily righting the egg-boiler—nae black within, Helen Rohan, let who will be unscoured graceless platters like Milord Verney."

Yet it was blacked, and he ate it unseeing, and declared it to be the best-poached of all.

Sandy, whose woe was revived by repletion, again forgot it in laughing covertly at his encomiums on the egg.

Tiring, after a time, of seeing M'Causland drink ale, admonish Alexis,—whom he treated as a boy, despite his six and twenty years—and lose himself pondering over charges disputed by Sir Burleigh, I reminded Sandy of our walk.

"Like twa troth-plights!" suggested M'Causland, caustically. "Is that to be it, Helen Rohan?"

Not until the canon-law is repealed. I drew back his grey grizzled head, and kissed his wrinkled forehead.

"Ah, this love!" he said, when Alexis withdrew to prepare for the walk.

"It's the Lord's mercy it doesn't waste our time—me and Sir Burleigh."

"Speer ye what 'tis, Helen?"

"Illusion fostered by words," I replied, with a little yawn, reversing an empty egg-shell, and tapping it into fractures. "See, Uncle, a man's heart wrought on by love!—broken, rived, and yet with nothing in it."

"Ay! but ye ate the yoke first," he said cunningly, "an' so it is."

"Women spend a', and then cry out on our emptiness, and in sport break us up."

Worsted in my metaphor, I was silent until Alexis re-entered, attired in a kilt, covered with barbaric ornament:—the showy plaid of his clan

over his shoulder, an eagle-feathered bonnet—all his best bravery on—brought from the Highlands.

The elder M'Causland's eyes glistened with pride as he surveyed him.

"Ye look a' a chief, Alexis," he said, proudly, "but its aye unbecomin' to be vain o' our temporalities Sandy!"

For me I could not forbear a smile at his so attiring himself under all the circumstances of time, place, and his humble position as under-steward, but personal vanity is pardonable in youth, especially when, as here, it turns an awkward rustic to a Highland chief.

Freed from the southron clothes, the badge of his servitude, Alexis talked as gaily, walked as buoyantly as a prisoner might who is freed from a chain. We went into the great silent Clifford woods, where beechen glades and dead branches glistening with early spring frost-rime under a silver scimitar new moon, made a sort of lovers' solitude.

Alexis was eloquent in praise of Scotland painting word-pictures of impossible Edens in misty glens, of Trossach homes, of mountain-solitudes—dreaming, perchance, of such a home shared with me.

Whilst I, but half-heeding him, was lost in

visions of my own—of porphyry fanes where the toilers of earth's giant progress gathered, where intellect was the deity.

So we walked on—happy in our dreams—on the soft turf, the shaded pathways, until, coming to a glade whence the scent of tobacco floated, we chanced upon Sir Burleigh and Verney Clifford, both smoking.

The old man was seated on a felled tree surrounded by lopped boughs and new chips of white wood, looking as saturnine as the most devout misogynist could wish so eminent a disciple of the creed to look; but it was not altogether against women that his hate was exercised—though 'twas well known he hated them all. A portion of his evil looks fell upon Lord Clifford, whose spending-journeys were notorious, and who doubtless was forced into some sort of disclosure in hope of relief from his embarrassments.

Milord Verney appeared to take his uncle's wrath calmly, not to say cynically; however, as his nature was, he directed it to us—not to escape it, being happily indifferent, but to make the wretched Alexis uncomfortable, to bring him from Highland chimeras to Southron facts, from security to shame.

Verney's inclination would have set his

mastiff Beech at Alexis; in default of Beech, he set Sir Burleigh.

"Let the man alone!" he said, with distinctness, in reply to an inarticulate growl from his uncle.

"He is courting, and, if you hate women, it doesn't follow that he need. We must have peasantry—can't keep up estates without ploughmen, and a good strain should be kept up, sir.

Alexis turned redder than the red plaid he wore on his shoulder, and clenched his hands.

"This is a pretty path! I chose one that ran straight past Lord Clifford, who was polite enough to remove his pipe and bow ceremoniously—as I felt, in mockery of Alexis's grand appearance.

"Well, I'll be d——d if one fool doesn't make another!" said Sir Burleigh scornfully. "Helen Rohan, stop and tell me something, will you? Which of us three men would you choose, stakes equal?"

"You," I replied looking over my shoulder as we were about diving into a deeper glade; and Sir Burleigh chuckled, and declared "Helen Rohan was the only woman he didn't hate," his extremest concession to the sex.

"I'll kill him!" muttered Alexis, breathless with repressed passion, referring to Verney.

"Ay, ye may be calm, Helen. Insults rin off yer mind like water off a mountain moorfowl. He might aye spit at the stars as weel as try to anger ye or injure ye—but am I a star? am I a star?"

He stopped, and stamped deep into the dead brach, and forthwith rose up a wail of callow pheasants his heavy foot had mangled, mingling with the terrified cry and noisy flight of the hen-bird. It happened, unfortunately, that we were not so far distant but that Sir Burleigh and Clifford heard, and came hastily to the spot, the game being strictly preserved.

One step would have removed Alexis from the scene of the massacre, but that step he refused to take—standing, with swollen veins and passion-purpled face, on the nest—on the still-struggling nestlings.

"Eh, it's you again!" Sir Burleigh retreated contemptuously, having imagined a possible poacher. Clifford, on the other hand, though perfectly aware that it was an accident, determined to make a *casus* of it against Alexis—his dull eyes flashed.

"You again!" he echoed. "Yes, you Highland gowk, you! When you are set up in the spring wheat to frighten crows will be your time for bird-mangling. What do you come here for,

d——n you! prancing about the park with your seven-acre feet, trampling on the few birds left us by your poaching clan."

For purposes of reviling, we were always a clân to Lord Clifford, though, of the three, my nationality was uncertain. The clan came out grandly now, with Sandy's kilt in the foreground, but for which we should have been safe from this open war. I smiled covertly at Clifford's verbal ingenuity, and was silent with a sort of speculative pleasure, waiting to hear him rush on to other untenable propositions and inaccurate affirmations. In this, Sandy did not count but as target to an aim. He was unusually silent also.

I took his hand, ranging myself, as the French say, on the side of the oppressed.

Passion, anguish, and hate were in his face—three devils dumbly rending against the opposing force of counsel and discretion.

"Milord," said I, desirous of turning his silver speech on myself—being indifferent to it—to save Sandy, whom it roused to wrath—"Milord, it was an accident. Sir Burleigh has excused it, so you may hold your peace."

"Pshaw!" said Verney. "Does your precious Highlander need a petticoat as well as a kilt for his protection? Let men fight their own battles,

Helen Rohan. If you are suffered here for sufficient reasons, he shall not be. So, sir, leave the park—and that at once!"

"I will not," said I, indignantly, "at your bidding, sir."

"You are welcome," said he sarcastically. "My authority were great indeed, if I could order you out. If I bid a man choose between his nephew and his favourite, I were as foolish as a Highlander, that, it would seem, you well know." He turned and went, relighting his pipe.

"What does he mean?" I turned to Alexis; his tall figure trembled and swayed—his lips were white—a cat-like contraction made a fiery line of the pupils of his eyes, sign in a Highlander of extremest wrath.

"Well, that Verney's gone."

I shrugged. "Don't notice him, Sandy. He is a tiger—a tiger—he means nothing, he will forget all this to-morrow, and be friendly enough."

"My God!" said Sandy under his breath.

I looked at him curiously, that any words of Verney's should so move a reasoning being—words, too, harmless in themselves, as those last! I could not claim to be a favourite with Sir Burleigh; at the best, he was indifferent to my existence. It was a stone flung at hazard to

hurt Sandy—who was hasty and credulous—nor weighed in evidence the character of the speaker.

"I'll kill him!" said Alexis.

"Nonsense!" said I consolingly. "Verney is amusing, if you don't take him seriously—and no sane person would; he has forgotten us by now. But he is a town man, and speaks town argot to poor country-folk. Let us laugh at him."

"Let us laugh at hell!" said he with quivering lips. "You may laugh, Helen Rohan, but I—I am there, a chained, manacled slave!—forced to silence—to hold my hand—to let that cur snarl at me."

"I know," said I soothingly, "dependency is hard. Yet, after all, it was not Sir Burleigh who spoke so, but only Clifford, whom no one regards. Go, think no more of his folly." I stood on tiptoe, reaching off his feather-crowned cap, which was awry, and smoothing the eagle's feather in it.

For a moment he watched me, the same woeful and haggard misery in his face. Then snatching the cap struck it furiously against the bole of the great oak under which we stood as though to dust from it the contamination of my fingers.

"Ay, the man is richt! richt!" he exclaimed. "Ye are for one or both of them. Shameless, to

stand you and tell me what I know, that ye wind Clifford round your finger. So others have thought, so others say, you scorn me—your eyes are elsewhere. My God! why did I come here to see what I have seen, to hear him tell ye sae in plain words?"

"Sandy, you are mad! Verney's insolence has put you beside yourself, you see the same thing at the farm every day and take no note of it. It is, indeed, unworthy serious notice—he himself does not mean it all."

"You mocking, tempting devil," he retorted, "to you it may be, ye can sit calm like an ill spirit and choose, but it must be a Clifford and no poor man—no one who loves you, who would die for you, who would never speak a rough word, nor think an ill thocht o' ye, Helen." His fury changed to a wrathful entreaty with these last words, hard to be resisted.

"No," said I, distressed, "you have always been kind till to-night. Let us leave talking and come home."

"Give me my answer," said he sullenly, "you shall not go till then. I came to ask you, and I demand a reply, let it be yes or no. I would mak' ye a good husban', Helen. No man could ever love ye more." The silent entreaty of his face said more than these few formal words. His hands

tremblingly outstretched, as though in an appeal for life, confused me—surely I was not to blame for this? I had not tried to attract his love, nor encourage this illusion. For very pity I would not all at once say no to him. "Let us," I repeated, "go home. No I cannot marry you, Sandy. I love you, but not enough to—to—live with you always — like that. A vision rose before me, even at the instant, of a small farm, a crofter's hearth-stane, Sandy with his giant stature and sullen handsome face always there, sometimes adoring sometimes doubting me, an ever-present atmosphere of surveillance—from love, all from love; but I was now free and would remain so.

So I said, with downcast eyes, that I was not good enough for him, not worthy of his love, not industrious—stumbling confusedly through negations of all sorts.

"Stop," said he at length, "I might have known it. Oh, my God, that I could die now—now! What use is my life to me? It is ended."

I looked up, grieved and frightened. His eyes were closed—his face white in the dusky shadows of the young leaves, as he leaned against the tree-trunk.

"Sandy," said I, taking his hand, "we can be friends. We will not alter to each other, but be always true friends."

He made no answer—brushing the tears from his eyes, which refilled again and again.

"Tears!" said I, in despair, at this unlooked-for grief.

"Yes, tears!" he said, defiantly; "and in my heart, Helen, thank God you will never suffer as I do. I have loved you for years. I am a man of near thirty—no mere boy, as it suits you to treat me; and have lived this dog's life in hopes of you—ay, to guard you from that cursed Clifford—but for them, you would have loved me, had they kept their distance, let you alone."

"Would," said I. "You know I do, Sandy. Let this folly of marrying be. Why should you want to marry me? It is better as it is; besides, you are only twenty-five; why do you say it is thirty? How could I obey you, or be respectful? Now, be reasonable—you are but a boy after all."

"Thank God," said he, "that you have no heart to be broke—wrung—rived as mine is now—through you—by you!"

I was silent. It seemed to me that nothing I could say would reach the proud height of that lofty head leaning against the tree-trunk—a king, if kings were chosen by stature or stateliness of form, by honour or manliness.

Evening closed in. It was cold and damp.

A moon-ray came through the boughs, resting on his face, recalling him to the present.

With a moan, as one in a cruel dream, he moved his head. "Let us go," said he. "I hope never to see this place again. Come, see the last of me—the end of your devil's work!" Dragging my hand through his arm, he strode off, out of the shadows, into the homeward way, out of the inaction of pain, to the restless action of despair. "You shall see the end," said he, moaning, "the very completion of your work. I will not suffer alone. What have I done to feel this heartbreak—this bitter pain?" So we went into the misty moonlight.

We spoke no word as we went on over the shadowland of the beeches. On over the silver-rimed brach, out through the grey gates on whose carved stone pillars were flowers and leaves, and shields in bas-relief of the arms of Clifford and Burleigh.

I made no opposition: as well that the fury and anguish should be walked down—as now, with a sharp pang, I felt it must many and many a time have been ploughed down, into the rifted furrows, which seemed so unlike the graves of blighted hopes and slighted love.

I was awed and daunted by the strange look on Alexis's face, a fixed and ashen-hued pallor,

like that left by long sickness, or gained by age and care.

We gained the road to the market-town, meeting a few countryfolk returning from the mop and market. It was a long and dusty seven miles to the town, yet as we sped on I could frame no protest, feel no fatigue, so much was I wonder-stricken and awed by this fierce silence—this rapid onward rush, as though death followed us. My spirit was overpowered by his—my will fused, as air by flame.

Entering the Market Square—littered with broken straw, for there had been large sales that day—Alexis fought and forced his way, like one possessed, through the thickest of the crowd, dragging me wherever a passage could be made, "to see the end!"

I did not even obscurely guess his meaning, tired and heated by the long walk, dazed by the sudden change from dusty country-roads, overhung by their thick hedgerows, to this crowd, till the roll of a drum, the shrillness of pipes, and the sight of a recruiting party bringing along its latest prize, awoke me at once to his intention—he was about to enlist.

My heart seemed to stand still, as this conviction succeeded to my confused awe of him. A sudden surge of the mob from all sides closed

us in, forcing us to be witness of what to them was a veritable domestic tragedy.

Only a ploughboy, drunk and angry, had enlisted, buying revenge by patriotism, bravery by beer, whose friends were vainly trying to buy him off, their utter poverty stronger than their goodwill. Who would buy off Alexis?

I clung to him spelled. This social precipice seemed frightful to me. What could I do to prevent him?

For the ploughboy, who was one of our own labourers and a special henchman of Alexis, all sorts of bribes were offered.

A drink.

A golden half-guinea.

I had absolutely nothing wherewith to buy off Alexis; he was deaf to my voice, blind to my tears, which rained down on his hands. Oh for a minute of that influence I had over him but one hour since!

A torrent of delirious incoherent words broke from his lips, which were white and trembling.

A few who had a minute to spare from the scene at hand shook their heads. They thought him drunk—as so many there were—so he was truly, but not with wine.

Baffled love, jealousy, despair, swept all

before them; he thought but of escape, of vengeance, nor cared if he too suffered by it—vengeance on me—who had truly never wronged him, nor fostered his illusions.

"Make room here!" shouted the Sergeant in charge. "Make room for us, gentlemen, we must be getting to quarters."

"Take these now an' let him off," said one, offering a number of screws of tobacco, evidently a week's supply, and all he had, which he judged would be irresistible temptation. One withered old man whose back was covered by an elaborately embroidered smock, and whose gaitered legs could hardly support him, after many times taking it from his mouth and replacing it, offered his pipe, a briar-root, well blackened, in exchange for the promising recruit. These were very poor labouring-folk, moved by class sympathy with the boy who had 'listed. Even the Sergeant wavered, so great was the clamour and lamentation, so unpromising the recruit.

But he dared not publicly accept the bribery, and, with his hand on the shoulder of the boy, who was whimpering in concert with his mother, was about to lead him away, saying in a tone of great authority, "tho' tempered with persuasion,"

"Now, you jest look here—he's took the

shillin', an' there's an end. Is his Majesty ter be cheated? Not him—not if I know it! The devil take ye, man! (to Alexis) jest you lay hands on him—that's all!"

For reply, Alexis laid very violent hands on the wretched youth, flinging him into his kinsfolks' arms; who, now that he was returned to their bosoms, began fiercely to upbraid the impetus of his return—of which he was blameless.

"If I offer myself—if I offer myself—" The deep tone of Alexis stopped the fierce eloquence of the trooper, who stared on him in amazement.

"Why, you're a gentleman, ain't you?" he began slowly; then, hastily thrusting a shilling into his hand, which closed on it with a sharp mechanical grip, he continued, with laughing carelessness:

"Not but what the best gentlemen in the land's proud to serve their King—so I enlist you in the King's name. Come along—let's get out o' this. You'll git swore in to-morrow, and make a real good soldier!"

The mob, busy with its recovered treasure, had taken no heed of the words which passed between M'Causland and the soldier; but, as he was moving away, someone started the cry

that "Young M'Causland had bought off Bill Stovel," and a faint cheer was raised.

They soon dispersed, however, to indulge in drinks with the lucky Bill; and Alexis, having gone a few yards, returned to me—by favour of his captor, who, regarding him as a prize of value, kept close ward on him—to say good-bye; he looked savage, exultant, terrible, for the moment—yet, now that it was done—now that the vengeance on me, for my supposed indifference to his feelings, was accomplished, and the plunge was taken—he seemed in a degree sobered into a sort of consciousness of its gravity, but only as it affected himself in the immediate present—the immediate parting.

I, however, who had to think for all, who foresaw storms at home, and attacks, for which philosophy would be but a thin shield, for my supposed part in the affair, felt indignation the quality most prominent in the confusion, and in no mood to try and reconcile the fool to his folly, the prodigal to his husks.

"Good-bye, Helen!" Alexis's face looked ghastly with the prescience of the coming parting. Vengeance was departing, love returning. "Good-bye! My God! I canna part wi' ye! Come wi' me to the guardhouse, Helen, it is not far."

"Ladies not admitted," said the Sergeant, with the true soldier-simper. "Can't ye buy him off, Miss?"

"He has chosen," I say coldly. "Why should I?"

"Ah! my God! you're a cold heart, you are!" said the Sergeant. Its easy to see which leg the boot's on. Never mind, my man!"—(to Alexis)—"as good fish in the sea as ever come out of it. You'll forget her, never fear—an' she cryin' her eyes out for you! That I've seen before. We're at war now, Miss, wi' France—and perhaps you're not aware that men get killed in battle sometimes? Supposin', then, you think of all this—an' him dead and cold on a foreign battlefield? You won't remember your quarrels then. Now, my wench!" as I continued silent, lost in thought, "do you mean to say, 'Good-bye! God bless you!' Best be sharp—I'm after hours as it is."

"Yes," I replied, "'tis half-past eight, and no enlistment is legal after six."

"It's a nice point to raise," said the Sergeant dubiously. "Besides, 'twas as a substitute, you see. T'other was an earlier job. Now, forget an' forgive, like a good girl! you'll only be sorry you know, when it's no good—an' he's too fur off to know it—an' too happy, wi' another sweetheart, to heed it."

"I am never sorry nor glad, grieved nor surprised," I think, musingly regarding the scene, which, silvered by the moon-rays, looked like an unfamiliar picture, in which we could not be bearing a part, yet, if we were, it would pass on in the stream of time and be forgot, as other scenes had done, unconsciously. I philosophised on it; all seemed unreal, dream-like, till again Alexis spoke, his voice choked and hollow—one hand shading his eyes, striving to hide the quivering despair now in his face. All his fury gone, sanity rushing back on him at floodtide. The blow which had struck me recoiling on himself. "My God!" said he, "what have I done? This is not justice—to send me away for loving her!"

"Oh, you'll get over it," said the Sergeant with rough sympathy. "Say good-bye, man, we must be on the move. Here, you!"—he seized my arm roughly, pushing me to Alexis—"say good-bye to him, for shame! If I was you, my man, I'd say it for both, an' a kiss for both too; but you're no soldier. In a month you'll have sweethearts enough; yet, if you fancy this one, make her kiss an' be friends. I would, blessed if I wouldn't!"

"Would you?" The spirit of race-antagonism rose in my heart at this—of scorn that

this clod should regard any power he possessed equal to the control of a higher, more subtle spirit. I pushed back my beaver bonnet and looked at him coldly and calmly, as a challenged noble at a Red.

"Have you ever had a sweetheart like me?"

He gazed greedily on my face, calm and statue-like, the moonlight gilding my bronze-hued hair to gold, turning my sombre grey eyes to fathomless depths, lighting up the rose-lines of lips and cheeks, the white silk clearness of my throat and small ears.

"Can't say I have," he said, relinquishing his fixed gaze as I smiled. "You're rare and handsome, that's plain to see; but handsome is that handsome does, an' when you're matched you ought to be mated—such a fine chap as he is, an' so fond o' ye, an' all."

"That's a bit of natural philosophy, there's no disputing."

Another voice was added to our colloquy, another figure joined our group—a young officer in mufti; he was smoking.

"What's the matter, sergeant? Will no one serve Cæsar?"

"Cæsar'll have to serve himself by-and-by, if this sort of thing goes on," said the Sergeant sullenly, weary of endeavouring after peace-

making. "Such a sort of proud stand-off wenches an' cryin' men in these parts there is!"

"You don't happen to be Joan of Arc or Helen of Troy, do you?" the new-comer appealed to me, "for, if you do, Spain's welcome to you for me, or France either." He puffed the residue of smoke this learned speech had left between his lips, contemptuously in air.

"For shame, sir!" said the Sergeant, who, being on business, was the first to cry back to the *point d'appui*. "Three soldiers at odds with a lady—she's no Frenchman—I'd rather 'list her any day than him," pointing to Alexis, who, absorbed in grief, seemed oblivious to the fact that this affected us, that time was spending, and this interesting dialogue would not go on for ever.

"I'm not for quarrelling, sergeant," responded the young officer with a grin.

"Take off that fellow—tears and all. I'll bring any message madam, here, thinks of. When he's gone, she will relent—I know them!"

"I have no message," I said, settling my beaver bonnet, as Alexis, too stupor-bound to resist, was marched off to the guardhouse. "No message, but, for kindness, send over to the Manor Farm to-morrow, and let them

know." I turned to go, waving off the offered escort of the officer, who seemed too indifferent to feminine society to desire to persevere; and so I found myself again alone on the white highway—deserted, now, and silent—silent and a desert. 'Tis what philosophy would make of life. All of the joyous, noisy insect-life of the day, with its thousand cries—songs—voices—hushed into this white silentness—so cold, vast, yet beautiful!

The great buzzing fly, Alexis, gone! Was I grieved or glad?

I knew not:—only knew that silence was beautiful to me; that vast, unfading worlds of dreams swallowed up the real presence of the lives around me—as the sea drinks sunlit brooks—and that, like the sea, I was only for a moment changed by outward influence.

CHAPTER II.

"I'll gar ye grieve, ye minx! I'll gar ye grieve!"

The elder M'Causland was pottering in and out in futile grief and fretful anguish, the next morning, on learning the enlistment of Alexis, which he had the idiot folly to blame me with, instead of Verney, who, I told him, quarrelled with Alexis.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" I made a big blot on the ledger and shook the pounce-box on it, whilst I looked through the bars of the desk, calmly, at the fury and excitement of the worthy steward. "Besides," I added, *sotto voce*, "people like Abel can be very aggravating when they like."

A sentiment cordially endorsed by Verney Clifford, who, entering just then and learning the cause of M'Causland's excitement, sided against him and with me, a little conscience-struck, too, at his share in it.

"Two ne'er-do-weels!" said M'Causland, bitterly, as he flung out of the parlour to mount his gig and drive to headquarters to buy off the charming Alexis, whom he loved as his own son. "Two ne'er-do-weels!"

"Two ne'er-do-betters!" said Verney Clifford sourly. "A good stroke of business, Helen! I heard of it last night. And if M'Causland buy the cub off, write me down. It is the best that could happen for us all. Dutch!"

"What a d——d fuss!" Sir Burleigh came in like an old farmer, with a sample of turnip-seed in his hand.

"Here, you get out of that desk, Verney! He's after no good, Helen Rohan, and you know it! Be ashamed o' yourself! Make me a sample-bag."

"Here's one!" I tore a leaf out of the ledger (being vexed), at which daring sacrilege of farm-accounts Sir Burleigh was going to swear, but refrained, lest I should leave him only the covers to swear by.

"That'll do, Helen Rohan. A beautiful bag—beautiful," he said, with an aspect of the deepest malignity, which sweetened Verney Clifford to honey, who muttered to me, aside:

"Plenty more leaves where that came from—eh, Helen? Tear out some more; I'll lay odds he would swear, five to one, Helen."

"Now, you clear out of there!"

Sir Burleigh took the place obediently vacated by Verney, and, smoothing out the leaf, said coaxingly:

"Pin it in again, Helen Rohan—pin it in again, or we shall get in a d——d muddle."

I pinned it in meekly and obediently, being rewarded by a paternal pat on the head; whilst, in default of a bag, Sir Burleigh tied up the turnip-seed in a corner of his pockethandkerchief, and—after a sounding malediction or two on the absent Alexis for withdrawing his prime minister, M'Causland—took his departure, dragging Lord Clifford with him.

It was still early. I turned, at the sound of the sheepbells trooping past in the broad-meadow opposite the window, to see the whole countryside silvered with frost-rime, on which the sun, scarce conquering the morning mists, was lingering lovingly, loth to destroy its fragile, evanescent beauty.

The bells from the market-town were ringing a joyous noisy peal, for a wedding. After all, life is better than philosophy.

I quitted the desk with a sigh, feeling like some old-old worn-out witch, who has lived in midnight till the freshness of morning is a sharp pain to her.

I had hitherto had a vicarious sort of out-door life in the abounding energy of Alexis: his presence withdrawn, I felt like one who goes about stale and unwashed, unrefreshed, dull,

despondent. It must be they would let him off.

Who would have thought philosophy so little worth? It was all his reading of Gallic wars and Roman soldiers, I thought. Taking, not my beaver bonnet, but one of Alexis's feather-crowned caps, I went out through the kitchen, past the busy servant and wrinkled housekeeper, to the fields beyond the farmyard: there I was joined by Alexis's favourite hound, and followed by four white calves, which, being separated from the cows, seemed bewildered, and bleated out a hungry, pitiful chorus. Their feeding had evidently been forgotten—perhaps they had been Sandy's peculiar care. So he was missed and mourned. I returned to the dairy, debating that I had deprived them of their protector, and must herd them myself.

Filled the pails with new milk, and, putting on a yoke, carried them rather staggeringly to the fields, putting them down by a pile of dark faggots with patches of white-frost on them.

The calves gathered round, their white velvet coats smooth and soft in the sunlight, as they pushed and scrambled for turns at the food, eagerly.

The hound, as I sat on the lowest jut of the woodpile, laid his head in my lap, and, lifting

up his voice, howled for his absent master. Everything seemed lamenting for him.

"Hush, hush!" I said. "He has 'listed!—gar ye hae a better reason for his absence, Sandy mon?"

So I talked to the dog, consoling him by lavish caresses; and he was more than consoled, as the frosty exhilaration of the air more than consoled myself. After all, he was troublesome, and always angry for nothing.

"Is this the way to the Manor Farm?"

The steps of a horse on the turf made us look up, and scattered the calves from their food.

It was an officer-trooper on horseback who asked the question, and, on being answered "Yes," he added, with a smile:

"And I need not ask if you are Miss Rohan? I heard a pretty accurate description of you at the non-commissioned men's mess last night, after your sweetheart enlisted."

"And she offs with her bonnet."

"Can it be?—and you such a little lady to look at!"

He backed his horse, which was for carrying him away disdainfully from farms and calves.

"What has been—has been." I made Sandy's ears stand unnaturally on end. "Have you a letter for me?"

"No, no letter. The fellow was too ill at ease to write. For diversion, as I'm senior officer, I had him mount guard at my quarters, and I swear the only writing you'll get is a bill from two of my juniors who lost game after game of whist through stopping to listen to his lamentings."

"Eh, Helen Rohan? eh, Helen Rohan? eh, Helen Rohan? I say, can't you gift him with the grace to be quiet? If you don't, by ——! I'll have him flogged! Eh, Helen Rohan?"

He bent down smiling with a malicious consciousness of power, reining in his steed so loosely that, at the near approach of one of the calves, it started and, jumping half its height in air, flung him on to the woodpile and galloped off.

I had time, ere he rolled to earth, to suppress the smile his appearance caused.

He sprang up, white with fury at the shaking and indignity, while the well-stacked faggots shook and quivered under the shock, but kept their places, the calves staring stupidly at the whole procedure.

"I—I—trust I have not disturbed your equanimity, madam?" he stammered, seeming more *acharné* of that than of his fall.

"Not in the least." I caressed Sandy. "You were speaking of punishments. Are you hurt?"

"Very little. I fell on wood, not on stone." He looked at me sullenly, but, getting no sympathy, began wisely to conclude he had but his deserts, and to thaw somewhat in the ferocity of the policy he had announced towards Alexis, with, I presume, the intention of moving me to supplicate his clemency.

After a while, leaning against the woodstack, while his horse cropped the grass at leisure, he recommenced: "I say, the fellow can't be bought off, you know, but if you write a line or so to our colonel—"

"He would alight on a woodstack to read it."

"Would he? by George! Not if I know it, eh? Helen Rohan!"

As he came near, his face inflamed with wine-bibbing and his bloodshot eyes winking and blinking in the light of the fresh dazzling morning, I thought I should perfer, on the whole, to break Alexis's heart with silence, rather than put it in this man's power to repeat, in the hot fumes of mess-room riot, such words as would comfort him, such as I could not but pen. If I wrote, this man should not be my messenger at all. Under three bottles, those twinkling eyes might be trustworthy; over three bottles, even, I would not like to stand the unanswering

victim of their merciless glances—the butt of taunt and scoff from lips trained to scorn, of all that was true or tender.

Yet he was only a trooper—only a thorough soldier; no harm in him, save an overboldness with God and man. Tush! "Thou, God, seest not!" might have been expressly written of Colonel Tyrone Blount. However, our farm-Hercules Alexis, having invoked all these snakes about him, must abide them or strangle them.

"Pshaw! How should he know it?" Colonel Blount made me start from my reverie by adopting in form the very words I had in theory ascribed to him—only that the worthy trooper's was the venial sin (in his own eyes) of trying to snatch a kiss. Ascribing my startled glance to the mere materialism of this procedure, he laughed, leaving me still more unpleasantly impressed with the truth of my analysis of his character.

"What a nest," thought I, "of vipers has Alexis got into now!"

"How wide you open your goose-grey eyes!" he said. "Don't tell me that our promising recruit has left you ignorant of kissing, because if you do I shall not believe you, for as great a fool as he seems. Why don't you like him, eh? Got another one?"

To this I made no other reply than slightly loosening the hold I had on the hound's collar, who stalked between us and stared silently and inquiringly on Blount's face, without kindliness or approval.

"Like master, like man," he laughed, nodding towards the dog.

"Two calm, well-trained wooden peasants, who don't bark till there is justification for biting. I pity the poor devil, on my soul!"

He turned away in scornful vexation, and whistled for his horse, whilst Sandy and I, secure in our genealogy, traced out by nature in every well-fashioned feature and silken hair, let the taunt pass by unheeded and unregarded.

"Curse the horse!—he won't come for whistling," said Blount, carelessly, giving no sign that he meant to adopt other means of reclamation, but staring on me with a puzzled and baffled air.

Sandy gave a short growl and impatient yawn, as though asking why I permitted Blount to occupy my attention, and what a soldier had to do with a farm—an inquiry I answered by walking away with him over the rimed grass, Blount following like another dog desirous of adoption.

"If you haven't any message to the lover," he said as I walked on, "I may conclude my

dismissal made out, and no words wasted over it, either—not but what silence is eloquent enough sometimes. He caught my hand, which was resting on Sandy's collar, and held down the dog's indignant head by grasping the collar over my fingers.

"When you release him," I said, warningly, "I'll be prepared! Blount drew his sword with so sudden a movement, that both the dog and I were startled into a momentary awe; and, menacing Sandy with it, walked on calmly, taking no thought that one of my fingers was crushing against the steel buckle of the dog-collar.

At the sound of wheels he turned, and, pointing with his sword, which flashed dazzling in the sunlight, to our gig approaching, asked who the old fellow was driving. It was M'Causland—he seemed lost in thought—a sign of the ill-success of his mission.

"Who is the old fellow, eh?" repeated Blount. "Is it your father, the farmer?"

"No," I replied, releasing Sandy, who sprang gladly off to race to the gig. "It is the recruit's father, or rather uncle, for he is an orphan."

The Colonel laughed as long and loud at this plain statement of facts, as though it had been

some most exquisite pleasantry, and said, with his eyes brimming over:

"Oh! you women! You will be yourselves, try as you may to usurp our hardness, and coldness. Now you think to yourself: 'That reprobate colonel dare not ruffle the rose-leaves of the new recruit's repose. 'Poor orphan!' Why, I'm an orphan, if you come to that. If you want him well treated, treat me well. Now, don't toss your disdainful little head. 'Twas nature spoke, whether you would or no, my dear. Ha, ha! the best good thing the mess has heard for months."

I could not avoid a smile at his ingenious misapplication of my words, and invited him to enter the house, a further logical proof, as he thought, of his being right.

In reality, though I would not do it myself, I thought M'Causland might have the chance, if he chose to avail of it, of making interest for Alexis with his commander.

It was nothing to me if others chose to bewail material hardships: had I enlisted, I would unflinchingly have taken my chance, but every Scotch body has not a Spartan heart.

So I led the worthy Blount to the parlour, where M'Causland sat, his head bowed on to the table where lay his whip, hat, and beaver gloves.

He looked up as the Colonel returned his sword with a clank to its scabbard, and asked him sullenly what he wanted; then, forgetting him, cried out to me:

"Eh, Helen Rohan! hae ye planned my grave—where it is to be?"

"I aye drave to headquarters, an' he's no to be bought off—no to be bought off for love nor money."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Blount, winking to me.

"You haven't seen his colonel yet, Mister—"

"M'Causland." I supplied him with the name.

"I say you can't have got a definitive answer, since I was away. I'm Colonel Blount, in command there."

"Oh, are ye, sir?" M'Causland sprang up and gazed at him with stupid tear-sprent eyes. "Then ye'll ken the lad was aye drave to it, by that devil's neatherd, Helen Rohan, wha whippit him wi' scorpions, as I can testify? Wha are ye glarin' at?—ye d——d self-stayed minx, ruling ae body to their destroit—saying to this one, 'Go,' an' he goes, an' enlists."

Colonel Blount's sense of humour seemed to be keen, for he had to unbuckle his sword-belt with much clanking to obviate a reply, or prevent a laugh by seeming inattentive.

"Not but what she's a gude lass, sir—" M'Causland, as I slipped my hand through his arm, smoothed my hair caressingly. "But ye ken that young men will be young men, an' a trifle weighs on them when their hearts are touchit."

"Whom did ye see at our quarters?" inquired the Colonel.

"M'Kenzie—ah! and Shafton!"

"The young fellow himself—what does he say?"

"That he'll no return—that his interest in life's clean gone, that she's fussed him an' fausedhim, lickit him like a 'strictor, an' then left him to pine an' perish."

"I wonder the fool was not ashamed!" I flung off M'Causland's hand, stamped to my desk, entering into it as an aroused lioness into her den, enraged at this false-witnessing of my philosophy. To talk like a whining idiot! I never led him to believe anything. "It is an invention! Colonel Blount; you will do as you like, but, if you would oblige me, flog him!—flog him until he learns to be silent!"

Then, restraining my passion, I rustled over a heap of memoranda, accumulated since yesterday, and opened my entering ledger; while M'Causland, afraid of the storm he had aroused,

and of my eloquence persuading the nothing-loth Blount to extreme measures, produced a bottle of whiskey, and, with an apology for his forgetfulness, offered it to the visitor.

"Thank you, no. The fact of the matter is, Mr. M'Causland, that I have no power as of myself. I rode over—to—to— In short, if I find that second thoughts incline your son to buy a substitute, why we will consult and see if we can strain a point in his favour under the exceptional circumstances—eh, Helen Rohan?

These last words almost under his breath, whilst he tugged at the buckle of his belt.

"Perhaps you don't like the smóky flavour?"

M'Causland, intent on making interest by hospitality, hardly attended to Blount's speech—apparently under the impression that there was leisure to argue as in a court of session about the interesting Alexis.

"Mayhap you don't like the smoke? I've got some mellower, mair mellow. I'll no be twa minutes getting it, sir." Blount honourably occupied two minutes in fixing on his sword, and then, like a prisoner freed from parole, approached the desk.

"You have a hard time of it here—eh, Helen? Blamed with this unlicked cub's desertion, and spoken to so harshly! Ne'er mind, my girl!

when you want a friend, write to Tyrone Blount. We'll make room for you in the regiment, if others have to go. Did you do all this writing? By George! you shall be adjutant!"

"Are you quite sincere?" I took up a round boxwood ruler, not with the intention of avenging this questionable consolation, but to rule a double column.

"On my soul! yes," said he gravely.

M'Causland, entering just then, stopped further offers; and Blount, drinking to our health, took his leave, letting M'Causland precede him, and lingering to give a look and leer to the very last.

"The chiel 's safe, Helen!—the chiel 's safe!"

M'Causland returned rubbing his hands, from attending the colonel to the gate.

"D'ye hear, Helen Rohan? 'Twas his colonel! Ye scarce lookit at the man—but let me tell you, *interest* 's the word; and he has a friend at court now."

Whatever misgivings I had as to this friend's friendliness, remained unexpressed, but, in contrast to my uncle's hopefulness, I thought the worse of Sandy's prospects now I had seen his commander.

CHAPTER III.

Everything looked uncanny and strange when, next day, we sat down to breakfast without Alexis. I missed his watchful eye and helping hand. If I had helped on the catastrophe, it was unwittingly, nor out of any cruelty or planning. I felt sorry that his broad shoulders and stately head were no more to be outlined against the window. I felt still more grieved at the grey downcast grief of M'Causland's face. "What good am I?" thought I fretfully. "If they would take me for a soldier, I would exchange and let Sandy free." Then I thought how the offer would appear to Blount, and smiled. This angered M'Causland.

"Ye are cruel!" said he sternly. "The poor lad is far off an' in barracks, yet ye might pity him, so much as his heart was set on ye! It is in vain I tell him ye are a Jezebel!"

"I am not!" said I indignantly. "Have I ever hired men of Belial to swear away Sandy's life, or anybody's? I am not treacherous, at anyrate. I helped myself to rook-pie on this, because Sandy had shot the rooks.

"What ails ye, to feed like a vulture?" said M'Causland harshly.

"I don't know," said I, ashamed, though gluttony was not a vice of mine. "I was thinking of Sandy, and he shot them; but I've finished, I'll eat no more."

"Gude Lord forbid I should stand between ye and your food!" said he. "It's sour grief an' fashious thoughts, Helen."

"Why," he resumed, with increased irritability, "why have ye got on that gay gown?"

"Gay!" I said in surprise, glancing at the sombre dusky pink-brown shaded of my attire. "If it be gay, I did not think of it—it just came to hand."

"Ay! ay!" he returned, absently, forgetting that grievance. "An' him in scarlet, like the Babylon woman—like colour, like deeds!"

I leaned back in my chair listening, unheeding; a little old steel mirror, of which there were many in the house, showed me myself at a distance, much diminished. This eidolon was as real as the pink-robed reality. What was I, sitting there, in that farm-parlour, listening to reproaches, eating pie, even to myself? Only an unreal image—an abstraction!—A slight and shadowy figure in indistinct purple, for so the steel chose to reflect colour from its surface.

"Weel," said M'Causland, rising and drawing on his gloves, "it's market at Tamford, an', if a steward's burstin' wi' grief, Sir Burleigh maun hae markets respectit, an' prices-current quoted like a book. I must ride over, Helen Rohan—I must ride over: there's threescore yowes fit for the slaughter."

"Threescore an' six," I corrected, "with those in the cow-pasture."

"Richt, child! richt! It's a fashious warld, an' we're no our ain guides!"

M'Causland, having sent the shepherd off with the sheep, painfully followed, riding away with bitter thoughts to keep him company to the Tamford market. He was to see Alexis again in a week—access before having been stormily exclaimed against by Sir Burleigh, who, usurping M'Causland's conscience, had persuaded him to "Give the weak worthless fool a taste of the world's drilling."

So the slow days succeeded one another until, on the Thursday, a vague remorse and penitence seized me at sight of the hound mournfully searching in the gloaming for his lost master.

I was out in the fields; a March dust-storm held sway on the road beyond; the branches of the half-naked trees were swaying and shivering

in the dry cold wind — the very grass was shrivelled by its touch, like harsh grey hair.

"Let us come and see him!" I said to the dog, tying my flapping hat more tightly. Getting over a stile, we soon gained the road. It was dusk and dusty; the wind, which shrivelled everything else, did not spare us. We walked along slowly and despondently. A figure in the distance slouched towards us.

"It's Bill Stovel!" a mournful voice assured me, seeing that I paused. "An' the troopers, they be gane. I might ha' bin a soldier."

Bill Stovel, absorbed in his private ruminations on that brilliant possible, went on his way.

"Where have they gone—the soldiers?" I recalled Bill Stovel, who pointed vaguely north-west.

"Out o' Letchford they do say, but only for the day, like: hurryin' and harryin' men about like cattle!"

Bill's internal convictions in favour of abstract soldiering, seemed confused in his mind with the weighty and voluble arguments against it of his kinsfolk.

"Letchford!" I stood still, feeling more and more shrivelled by the dry wind, letting Mr. Stovel pursue his way.

"Letchford!" Oh, God! to realise that seven

long miles must be traversed in the dark and dust, and then returned over.

"We cannot!" I murmured. "Yet we must see Sandy." We bent our heads against it, but the wind was too much for us. A sheltering hedgerow, where grey grasses met above our heads, tempted us to rest until the moon rising, and the wind moaning itself away, encouraged us to try at the terrible seven!

Beguiled by thronging thoughts, we found field-paths and short-cuts diminish the distance; and, once in sight of Letchford, we could hear the shouting of the country crowd assembled to do honour to the soldiers.

Soon we were amongst it, and Sandy and I had singled out Alexis, faithfully following where he trod, but keeping out of sight till a convenient season.

The Sergeant who had enlisted him was looking to right and left for more recruits for the morrow, and in one of these surveys he saw me and started, falling out, while the long line of the regiment passed, to linger near.

"Changed yer mind, miss? He came up with a familiar smile. "An' how d'ye think M'Causland looks in uniform, eh? Awkward like at first, but there's a reason for that."

He looked at me with his head slightly inclined

to one side, and a mingled embarrassment and hardihood of manner—the manner of one who confesses to a fault which, venial in his own eyes, may not be so regarded by others.

"Mind you, I had nought to do with it!" he went on, after a pause; "but our colonel—he's a rare good soldier, too—has one way for all—an' no gainsaying that—if it was my last word. 'Twas no spite to M'Causland. I known heaps of others suffer the same thing."

"Suffer?" I said, in amaze, visions of thumb-screws, racks, and red-hot pincers reviving.

"Ah well," he rejoined, "it's a matter of discipline you wouldn't understand—but it's all right. Blount knows his business, an' his men like him when they're used to him. M'Causland got a lick from the cat yesterday."

I drew back, incredulous. The Sergeant shrugged his shoulders.

"How—how many?" I gasped, as at a mouthful of sea-water from a great wave that had broken over me.

"There, don't you go an' break your heart!" said the Sergeant. "A fleabite—five-and-twenty. Took 'em without moving a muscle. It's only a bit of scarf-skin the less, an' the man's a made-soldier. Bless you! if they don't get it, they think themselves colonels or majors. He

told me himself, he wasn't sorry it was over —that it only wanted that! Poor chap! he'll be real pleased to see you. Are you comin' to quarters? I'll pass you. Just wait till we've shook down a bit, and I'll come an' fetch ye."

He darted forward, as a halt was called and the soldiers told off to their different billets on the townspeople.

"Our squad's got into the townhall!" said the Sergeant gleefully rejoining me, "our squad has!" And, drawing my hand through his arm with familiar gallantry, he proceeded up the steps to the townhall and presented me with effrontery to the sentry as his wife.

"Ah! ah!" said the sentry, "more like one o' Blount's wives."

Not appearing to think it his special mission to clear his colonel's character, the Sergeant went on, whistling as he picked his way through the dimly-lighted corn-exchange—over saddles, accoutrements, and here and there a tired soldier gracefully reclining amid the impedimenta, their hands full of food, their mouths of oaths, of which we came in for a share when by chance we stepped unknowingly on any part of their uncoiled length.

To all these salutations the Sergeant responded with philosophical cheerfulness:

"All right, mate; it's only me."

"Oh, you is it?" muttered one of the aggrieved. "It's a real pleasure to be trod on by you."

This was the town's place of business. At the foot of a winding stone-staircase leading to galleries above, the Sergeant stopped, and peered upward, counting the doors from the front of the building inward, then whispered:

"I rigged up a guardroom—but, bless you! there's no fear of punishment to-night unless they're out-and-out. So I just shoved M'Causland in to be by himself—not for spite, my dear: he is not quite one of us yet you, see."

"By ——! the sentry's gone! All the better! You run up. I can't stop any longer. There, that's the door." He pointed to the dusky chaos above, and, giving me a reassuring pat on the shoulder, went off.

I had not time to recover from my surprise before I heard a door bang far overhead, when slowly, and halting many times to consider its dangers, I stole upstairs.

Guided by the strange jarring ring of the door plates and the vibration of the air, I opened the right door, led there partly also by the darkness and silence. In all the other rooms were voices, clanking accoutrements, laughter:—in

M'Causland's, only a dark figure stretched on the floor—silent, desolate; and a handful of moon-rays flung in by some invisible power of good.

All round the rooms were strong safes wherein the town-archives were kept; a truss of straw and a blanket neatly folded were in one corner, a sword and saddle in another, and filling up all vacancy this dark dreariness—Alexis! I moaned. None heard or heeded. I was glad of this, for, though my own heart was but little touched, it was sore with anxiety lest other some who knew not his grief, should doubt of its genuineness, or mock its display.

I slipped the bolt of the door, and, stepping over him, sat down on the straw, with clasped hands, waiting its lapse, until diminished to uncertain moans and groans, and the moon-rays shifting to his wet eyes, they opened, and turned to me, seeming not as they saw me corporeally, but in a vision, as they had doubtless often seen me before, whilst his entreating hands were held out to me to clasp.

"Get up, Sandy!" I said, distressed a little for him. My voice awoke him to reality, and he staggered to his feet, leaning against the door, an eager joy trembling for a minute over his sullen grief-wet face.

"What did ye come for?" he broke out at length. "Was it not enough to drive me here? Ye can aye nestle in Verney Clifford's arms now."

"Can I?"

"Ay! ye can so!" said Alexis grimly, and the next minute his lips quivered so that the words broke on them like waves on a sunk rock, for he kept on a fierce monologue—to which, as 'twas unintelligible and immoral, I didn't listen, but turned to count the nails in the cavalry-saddle. Then, like a slighted woman, he began to cry again, baring one brawny arm and shoulder, and called to me to come and see the devil's work I had made on him.

"I did not do it," I responded, glancing at the livid stripes on his flesh. Nevertheless, though I had counted eighty nails—having set myself to count one hundred before I pitied him—I could no longer keep my seat nor retain my colour, but must needs—for one fool makes many—go and hide my wet eyes on the burning livid stripes, and moan, for I knew not before how far the world's cruelty could go.

Alexis's tears flowed faster for a while, as his arms clasped me closely; then, with a gulp, he checked them, and laughed as his great hand smoothed my hair.

"It is nothing," he said, "nothing now, Helen! Oh! my God! what would I not bear for you—to keep you here always!"

His red head bent lower until its close soft curls brushed my face, and his lips closed suffocatingly on mine. It was the first time in all my life I had ever been kissed, and all pleasurable ideas, with respect to kissing, fled for ever. Sooner the sharp stripes which left his breath. I did not, however, miscall it to Sandy. He, poor fellow, had doubtless only heard of it from hearsay, and, being naturally credulous, believed in it more than I. Yet I had to shield my face with my hands ere he would desist, and, looking at him, mused on his absurdity.

Had I gazed long, his very identity with the shy, awkward Highlander would have been doubtful to mine eyes.

The Sergeant was doubtless right when he asserted: "The man's a made-soldier!" All that was earthly and sensual, hardened and brought forward; the good, the true, and the tender, struck and cowering from sight—to disappear at the last entirely.

But time was passing. The long seven miles home had to be traversed every step on foot. M'Causland would long since be in bed, crediting that I was in my room asleep, little dreaming

of my absence, of my being here. So I appealed to Alexis as to the time.

As the words left my lips, a clock, in the church near by, tolled ten, and we both listened.

The moon, by this, had mounted high in the heavens, sending through the leaded window a square of pure white light which fell on Alexis's head and shoulders—he standing just opposite to the casement. I thought, continuing to gaze on him with a species of fascination, that he looked like some strange and ghastly picture. His face was quite still as he listened—white and wan with the fierce tide of mingled passions that had assailed him that day. Injustice and cruelty had done their worst, and the tardy reparation of love, so far from effacing, had brought their effects more prominently forward. "Love!" Again his face changed, a red flush suffused it; his glance wandered to the strong cell-like walls of the room; an emotion of pleasure seemed to possess him at its aspect. By a subtle intuition, I interpreted rightly this new phase—for, as I rose alarmed and signified my anxiety to be gone on account of the lateness of the hour, he leaned heavily against the door, as though testing its strength, and listened to me unheeding. "Helen," he said at length,

neither hearing nor replying to my request to go, "d'ye mind that old print at hame?"

"Yes," I said, conscious that a denial would serve no turn, and that an engraving of Bothwell making love to Mary Stuart was in his mind—a print he used to turn from with almost a blush if I were by, but which he must privately have studied and dwelt on.

"We have no time to talk of pictures," I said. "Sandy, it is ten by the clock."

"It's ne'er o' pictures I wad talk," said Alexis, his broad eyeballs glowing. "It is o' nature, which breaks through rules. She was a queen, an' he loved her—less her liking, Helen Rohan! When he could—how he could! My God! am I to stand, by an' see ye go to a Clifford?"

"I'll stay a little, to content you," I said, more than regretting the kisses which, allowed from pity, had put this new force and fire into Alexis' love. "I'll stay a little." Was this my Highland kinsman—shy, moody, jealous—this triumphant giant, who laughed at my small concession, and held me in estimation as a captive, who would love me less my liking, a Bothwell loved Mary?

> "A ladye bright his bridle ledde,
> Clade in a fayre kirtell."

So ran stories of ladies made captives by giants, and compelled to live with them in remote fastnesses; to cross courtyards, every day, strewn with the blood and bones of murdered knights, to propitiate their captors by submission.

Pshaw! this was but Sandy, and I was getting frightened for nothing. He was my slave, but, meantime, he was so huge and massive; how was it that his size and weight had never occurred to me before?

I sat on the straw, watching him: my face was in shadow; his—an advantage—in bright, all-revealing moonlight. Suddenly occurred to me his obstinacy—which, once aroused, was invincible; but for which he would not be in his present position—almost a social pariah, stripped, degraded! What had caused him at this moment to think of that pernicious old print?

I resolved, on my return, to destroy for the future all malign influence Bothwell could exercise from the long-ago past by burning it. Now any further reference to it, would but fix it in Alexis' mind as a precedent to any madness of his own.

What was Bothwell to him, or he to Bothwell, as someone said about one Hecuba, in an old playbook which M'Causland had burnt?

Speculating uneasily on this, I decided to be silent. He was always awkward at words: let him, therefore, speak.

"Helen!"

My own name—always my own name. It had never occurred to me before how often it was uttered. Was it because I was the only woman amongst them?

"Helen! ye canna leave here less my liking," said Sandy, with grim triumph, again eyeing the strength and solidity of the walls.

"Ye'll like," I said carelessly, "when ye tire of me, Sandy."

"Yes!" he said, with an involuntary stretching-out of his hands. "When I tire of ye, I shall be deep-buried! Tire!—I tell ye, a look of yours sends my blood red-hot—a touch o' your hand is more torture than stripes, unless it's in kindness!"

"What else should it be?" I rose hastily as he advanced, seeing my safety in harmless concession, more than in opposing him. "What kindness would I not do you, Sandy? I'll send some lint and some gillyflower-water for these stripes. I'll ask Sir Burleigh to make Blount explain them. It was cruel!—cruel!—an' you so good!"

M'Causland gasped with sudden rage and

wrath—as Bothwell might, had Queen Mary thrown a cup of cold water in his face (as she should have done)—at this reference to existing conditions. He was so wrapped up in an atmosphere made up to suit himself—of martyr and lover, so set on fire by a few consoling kisses, so happy in improbable and wicked possibilities—that my words, as I intended, lit upon him as a thunderclap ; and, like a thunderclap, cleared away the moral miasma of his thoughts for a moment—only for a moment. The next moment he had forgotten them. His whole soul set on some scheme of detention, he quitted for a second his guard on the door, availing of which, I very thankfully and gently opened it, and glided out, hearing its heavy clang when about halfway down the stairs, and glad so to get away.

CHAPTER IV.

Gout and grief continuing to distract M'Causland and Sir Burleigh, and a spell of wet weather having set in, I had no resource to wile away the time but the manufacture, from a recently-killed goose, of bundles of quill-pens, at which I was an adept.

All the feathers had been carefully pinned by the housekeeper into an old gazette—from which I withdrew them by handfuls as I wanted them, and, sitting by the fireside, I threw all I could not utilise into the fire, a broad red glow of logs, always kindled on damp days, and which consumed them instantly—so was it when my uncle entered.

"My lass, I am fixed in adamant resolve!" M'Causland's first words on his entrance sounded, as words very much in earnest often do, like a line in poetry; but their effect was marred by the context.

"In adamant resolve," he repeated, "that, let what will come o't, yese go no mair to the Hall while Clifford's there. Sir Burleigh sent for ye. Auld fule that he is!—he aye thinks ye a stock

or a stone, an' no Christian lass wi' a name to lose! God forgi' me to swear at him, an' me served him this forty year, forty! He sent to say he aye wanted ye at the Ha' frae morn till dark ae day this week—that he'll gie ye dinner. Ay, an' I doubt na, my lord 'll find ye wark enough. It behoves me to look to ye now, when there's a possible o' your becomin' a shameless painted callet—shamin' us a'!"

This was but a violent revulsion of feeling consequent on Alexis's loss. In a day or two M'Causland so far relapsed into his implicit faith in Sir Burleigh, his implicit trust in my good government of my lord, as to send me to see what Sir Burleigh's pleasure was.

"Be early, lass. He's awfu' when he has gout on him."

With this comfortable induction to Sir Burleigh's state of mind, I went, immediately after breakfast, carrying with me such memorabilia as our suzerain and sovereign might be likely to require. On the way, I mused over what my life was likely to be, should it ever come to pass that our relations to the Cliffords became estranged.

My ambition was still that of ignorance. The Hall embodied all that was at present real to me of grandeur and solidity. I had just, in

Alexis' case, seen enough of hard real life to know that, anywhere else, we should be duly classified, and set down into our lowly place like two curly-kale-plants.

Here, we had grown like the Scriptural mustard-seed, so that the birds of the air alit on us, ignorant of how short a way into the soil our roots penetrated—how easily at the Cliffords' pleasure we might be uprooted.

M'Causland might go or stay. A whiskey-bottle smoke-flavoured, the society of his wild highland or lowland kinsfolk, would be enough for him; but I, *déraciné* from here, would have to begin my plans over again. Something, I knew not what, induced a doubt of Verney Clifford's influence. It may have been Alexis' constant and fierce suspicion of him; but, so far as regarded myself, no doubt affected my resolve. To begin life over again at the mere bidding of Verney Clifford! The old woman obey her cat? I laugh contentedly.

"No, no, my Verney! You may drive your Highland cattle back to hills of heather, and crack your whip over the ragged minder of the herd who sits barefit on a whinstane on the hillside, her eyes fixed on the stars far overhead, —but be ye sure, even in star-gazing, that her

feet are firmly planted, and that she is not a reed in the wind."

My expedition to Letchford—though not avowed, nor, as far as I knew, known—had set me thinking deeply. The shock to our social system due to Sandy's absence and its cause, like the flight of a comet across the sky, had awakened my mind, more than years of the calm contemplation of lesser luminaries would have done.

To-day, M'Causland had gone to Letchford. I had little fear of his discovering that I had been, as, when the two men, uncle and nephew, met, either in anger or affection, they were generally incoherent and diffusive of speech, and my visit of yesterday would rank with some far-back interview. Besides, even Sandy might well shrink from any crucial questioning on it, after his words and ill-considered actions. I had not thought men had been so bold. Meditating thus, I reached the Hall, making my way to Sir Burleigh's study.

"Ah, you won't find him there!"

Verney Clifford, going out shooting, followed me with a gun in his hand, and stood near the door, ramming down a cartridge.

"You'll have to go to his bedroom, Helen Rohan—he's in bed!"

Verney seemed too intent on the cartridge to smile; yet the corners of his mouth curled upward at the suggestion.

I took no notice of it, but began to empty M'Causland's rough-scrawled, greasy receipts from the pocketbook.

"I'm not in bed, you young blackguard! Helen Rohan, just shove him from the door, will you? My hands are full."

Sir Burleigh entered, laden with account-books—himself arrayed in a ragged brocade dressing-gown and slippers. "In bed!" he continued, indignantly.

"The wonder is you're up—roistering at Letchford all night with those troopers."

"No matter for troopers!" said milord, biting a cartridge. "Helen Rohan was there to keep order—your immaculate scribe!"

"Was you?" Sir Burleigh turned to me in ungrammatical astonishment, then to Clifford. "If she was there, you took her, Verney."

"Love took her," sneered milord.

"Oh Sandy! Sandy! Ochone! Alexis!—is it true you're beat black and blue for serving your king and country? The fellow won't get into a kilt again in a hurry. Now I'm going; don't you get disinheriting me in favour of her heirs and assigns, Sir Burleigh! Because there'll be

the trouble of quartering a green guse bar sinister into our arms if you do."

"You be off, Verney! you be off!" chuckled Sir Burleigh. "Helen Rohan's a match for you—more than a match! She's safe enough here. Now, Helen Rohan, if you sit there and tell me one of those ewes fetched less than thirty shillings, I'll brain you with that pen."

"Thirty-five, sir, except six ailing ones from the cow-pasture."

"Very well! Now the hay!"

"So far, market's in our favour. A flood at Cranley fetched away over a hundred stacks; we have been selling largely."

"Eh!" he said with satisfaction, "they must buy, charge what we will; they can't starve their beasts—must buy from us!"

"Now, work away, my girl. Verney's gone. I just threw on this chamber-robe, as you won't keep bedroom-company."

"But, by ——! I can't sit up! I must leave you. I may be here before you go; if not, come and read them to me through the door, I'll leave it ajar. To think of that villain Verney's suggestions, and him at Letchford! You was not there —I know better."

Poor Sir Burleigh shuffled back to bed.

There is plenty of haze on the moral atmo-

sphere of Burleigh Hall, but it is less than nothing to me. I tot up the accustomed figures and balance the books. All emotions that fright or pleasure other folk, I look on at and appraise, and, if perchance any feeling of our common humanity intrude, suppress it, lest it turn and rend me. It is so bitter to love, so abject to lurk like a ghoul in a Golgotha of memory. I would stand statue-like and unmoved through the storms of time, and let the little pigmies of human kind race for the prizes which I despised; whilst beholding them afar off, I stonily deny that they are of more value than the beads and feathers of savage tribes. After some hours' work in silence, the trampling of horses made me look up, and at the same time a strident voice from above-stairs called me :

"Helen Rohan! Helen Rohan! Can't ye run, ye starched minx? Coming up like our Bess o' Bedlam Elizabeth! Here!"—as I gained the first landing—"don't come any further. There's Blount and some of his General's women at the door—that fool Verney told them they might come. Do you go and tell them to be off! I've got the gout! Can't see anybody!" He turned into his room and slammed the door, and I heard him creaking

into bed again; then went down to the door, which, as ever, stood hospitably open.

"How d'ye do, Miss Rohan?" Blount had alighted, and stood, in some embarrassment, waiting to assist a lady to dismount, who, appearing surprised at the silence and solitude of the place, hesitated to alight.

I stood on the broad hall-steps also in some embarrassment.

These people had been invited by Lord Clifford, and to send them away would anger him; on the other hand, a positive command from Sir Burleigh was not to be ignored.

"Is that one of the family portraits?" inquired the young lady, in half-languid sarcasm.

"No," said Blount, roughly, appearing angered at my silence. "It is the steward's daughter." Then he asked stiffly if Lord Clifford was in.

"Will you not alight?" I descended the steps and offered my hand to the young lady, who, accepting it, made a clear descent past Blount.

"Lord Clifford is out, and Sir Burleigh bid me say he is troubled with gout; but," I added, "you are welcome to Burleigh Hall."

"That's all right," said Blount, still chafing.

"Do you act groom as well as mistress, Helen Rohan?"

"At present, only groom of the chambers."

I took the young lady's hand and led her in, closely followed by Blount and a thin, silent, elderly man, who looked about him with a keen, hungry aspect.

We went to the large drawing-room, where yellow satin made a subdued-sunshine atmosphere; the three, all silent, following my guidance as a party might which had come to gaze at antiquities or pictures—but these people did not propose a dry survey, nor a feast on archæological reminiscences.

All the servants at the Hall were a Scotch gardener, Clifford's groom, and a fat red-faced woman-cook, who even, as I led in the rash victims of Lord Clifford's hospitality, came to the door of the drawing-room, breaking in half a bar of yellow soap.

"Who's yon?" She jerked her head at the visitors in undisguised amaze. "An' what brings them to Burleigh Hall?"

"They've heard of your entrées, soups, and soufflé," I replied, going to the door to answer her; "and they've come to luncheon."

"Some of milord's fine friends," grumbled the woman. "I do no more entrées to-day,

Helen Rohan; nor soufflé, for a week to come. Milord 'll be the death o' me one day. You can give them yourn, if you like; it's all ready in the study. I just came to tell ye so—Hanover rats!"

"Janet! you a Jacobite? Here, take your soap." I picked up the half that had fallen, and gave her a push.

"Get a good luncheon, and I'll write to Dick in Ireland for you."

"You see!" I returned to the drawing-room. "You see, Colonel Blount, I'm a sort of soldier on parole here. I have to suppress the revolt of the kitchen, and support the dignity of the drawing-room. After luncheon, I hope for your thanks; for that woman is the worst temper and the best cook in the county."

The young lady laughed, and asked who Dick was.

"He is her son," I replied, "a scapegrace sailor."

"Eh, you think all soldiers and sailors scapegraces?" said Blount.

"They generally are so," said the young lady, looking at him as if she did not believe herself. "But let me ask you"—(to me)—"will it lose you your place or anything, if we stay? It is dreadfully undignified, but I'm so hungry!"

"A true soldier's daughter!" put in the thin gentleman. "And, to tell you the truth, madam, I don't feel inclined to stand much on my dignity. I am quite willing you should be scapegoat to Sir Burleigh, since you kindly undertake the *rôle*."

Clearly, Verney had put them all *au courant* of his uncle's peculiar temper, and prepared them for possibilities.

"Luncheon's ready, Helen Rohan, an' you can bring 'em to it."

The cook had toned down in temper, and courtesied with the anticipatory smile of an artist who expects appreciation, as we filed out to the small dining-room where was a plentiful meal, very fairly served.

"As Heaven's viceregent!" I said, taking the head of the table. "Is that too blasphemous, Colonel Blount, for a steward's daughter?"

"I'm sure we are only too much obliged!" said the thin gentleman, unceremoniously taking the foot.

"Blount ought to do penance on a handful of grey-peas."

"And a glass of cold water thrown over him," added the young lady. "Miss Rohan, may I sit on your right-hand? Thank you!"

"I'm nearest her heart!" said Blount, seating

himself on my left. "I don't doubt I shall win her to forgive me."

"Hope," I said, beginning to carve a fowl, "I am such a little pearl—perhaps you did not see me when you were trampling."

"I am sorry!" said Blount earnestly, "I think I should have trampled the Crown jewels just then—it is only my way, you know."

"Exactly," I said. "Have not I just shown an intimate acquaintance with your ways in my simile?"

"Show him no mercy!" lisped the young lady. "You will give me the liver-wing, won't you? All my fault was saying you were like a pretty picture, standing silent on the steps with your ruffles and yellow hair."

"Trust Helen Rohan!" laughed Blount, helping himself to asparagus, "she was only casting about which she should choose—me or the General."

"Don't prove the daughter of the 'unjust steward' Miss Rohan!" laughed the General. "I thought, with my daughter, you looked like some pretty silent picture dismayed at our invasion. Choose me."

"Don't choose either, Miss Rohan," said the young lady, laying down her knife and fork. "Oh, if you knew how shockingly Colonel Blount

sneers! I am not going to marry him, though my father made me promise—all through avarice. He knows I cannot endure him."

She resumed her knife and fork, and played havoc with the liver-wing.

"'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer,'" quoted Blount, gruffly. "After luncheon, take her through the picture-gallery, and, if she doesn't boast, commend me to the devil! I beg all your pardons very sincerely!"

"I was looking at you, Helen Rohan."

"Am I beautiful, or merely pretty?" I put down my knife and fork, and crossed my hands, penitential fashion, on my breast, slightly bending my head that a shaft of sunlight which before rested on my neck might gild my hair.

"By jove!" Blount's elbows found an instant rest on the table, whilst his dull bloodshot eyes rested on my face. Then he said slowly, recalling his accustomed blunt coarseness of look and one:

"Don't you discount your picture-face too much, Helen Rohan. I've seen women, a d——d sight prettier than you, following the drum for a profession.

"Blount!" said the General, reprovingly, "Fernie's waiting for bread-sauce, which you seem bent on monopolising."

"Fernie! —my wife! my life!—a thousand pardons!" He pushed the sauce-boat half-across to her and resumed his dinner.

"Talking of pictures," said the General to me. "If Lord Clifford were here, I should insist on that part of the programme of our visit being carried out. We were promised I don't know how many Schœndels and Canalettos. Velasquezes were to be plentiful as berries, and Titians— But, talking of Titian, I must follow Blount's lead so far as to admire your ears, Miss Rohan. Titian ears, are they not, Fernie?"

"Yes," said Fernie, "I suppose so. I always think you right about pictures, except when you say you should like to steal them. You know you feel like that sometimes, when you come across a wee bit cabinet-picture, just pocketable."

"No, no," said the General, hastily; "let's be civil to ourselves, Fernie. I haven't done such a thing as yet."

"Don't trust him too far," shrugged Fernie. "Colonel Blount can't resist a promising recruit, nor General Tremenheere a portable picture."

"Talking of recruits,"—(Blount again, and as if glad of another opportunity for insolence, addressed me)—"Talking of recruits, I'm sorry

to say 'twas found necessary to flog our last—just a taste, Miss Rohan. Pshaw! if you love him, wish him a better soldier than he would have been without it."

He smiled with disdainful defiance.

"Bear witness with me"—(I appealed to the General)—"that Colonel Blount has in effect broken a promise he made me, and that I am going to punish him at my first chance."

"Ah, you may laugh now, my boy!" said the General, as Blount broke into a chuckle of excessive amusement, "but you mean it, Miss Rohan, I am sure; and in the day of his visitation I shall remember you did not seek your vengeance without fairly warning him."

"Whatever you choose to inflict," said Blount with an almost unbearable insolence of look and tone, "I will endure!" and he winked to the General, who primly drew down the corners of his thin mouth, and held his wine up to the light.

Finding that Miss Tremenheere, having finished her luncheon, was amusing herself by placing her knife and fork in parallel lines, I proposed to her to leave the men to their wine and come upstairs, to which she gladly agreed.

"If I were anyone but a soldier's daughter," she said as we went upstairs, "I should feel

bound to make a thousand apologies for Colonel Blount's free-speech. But he really and truly means no harm by it, Miss Rohan."

"I positively think we have begun to like it, my father and I. We are so shocked and amused, you know. He is so rough—he will never mend. You see, dear, if one had a china monster and broke him to pieces, and then joined him together again, ever so neatly, he would only be a monster still It's just the same with Tyrone Blount. So fast as you fracture him with reproof, you must mend him with laughter. So it's no good. Think of him as a china monster. I always do, or else I could not endure him."

Saying this, we gained the first broad landing. The dim cobwebbed window was partly open, and, having with our united strength pushed it heavily up, we leaned out to gaze over the beauty and solitude of the park.

A ragged rain-cloud in the distance was sending down sheeted water into a still, dark mere, round which, to its edge, was the piled rusty bracken of the past year. Nearer, the chill March sunshine lit up a quadrangular court-yard, in the midst of which stood a dovecot. The rough grey stone-walls of the building surrounding the court, unrelieved by lichens or

moss, might have belonged to a prison but that the large blank windows crowded each other in their flat outlook on the country, and the unceasing flight hither and thither of the pigeons, in the sunshine gave an air of life and liberty to its dulness.

"What an ugly old place!" Miss Tremenheere said involuntarily. "Is this all Lord Clifford will inherit from his uncle?"

"With the plenishing," I replied, "and the land, and ready-money, and prestige. Not so bad, on the whole!"

I was watching one particular pigeon—a grey, red-eyed, and vicious specimen, that fought all round with untiring ferocity—and comparing it, in its zeal for inflicting misery on its harmless fellows, with Verney Clifford, when I heard a significant and cautious cough above; and, looking up, saw Sir Burleigh, in the old dressing-gown and with bare feet, frantically and silently beckoning. Miss Tremenheere looked up too—then discreetly resumed her study of the pigeons.

Excusing myself for a minute to her, I went upstairs culprit-fashion, and was at once pinioned by one arm in the iron grasp of Sir Burleigh, and thrust into the picture-gallery, the door of which he slammed to with unre-

strained violence, as though glad of being able to begin with an unresisting victim.

"Ain't you a nice young woman—aren't you a devil, Helen Rohan?"—he shook me by the arm to and fro—"to go and bring people here and oblige me to run about naked in my own house, with gout on me!"

"Oh, Sir Burleigh!" I said, appalled, "you've got your dressing-gown on."

"Yes you, d——d minx!—so have you got your ruffles on—your fine feathers, and superfine manners—which you must show off somewhere or perish. Perish me if I won't take off the d——d dressing-gown, and go down and tell them I don't want visitors!"

"Not this once," I said, "Verney asked them. Let them go of their own accord!—I'll hasten them, and then come up and read all the accounts to you. Please go to bed again, Sir Burleigh! Look at your feet, in this draughty horrid place—and you with gout!"

"Get rid of them, then!" he said, somewhat mollified by my meekness. "If you were Verney, I'd kill you, Helen Rohan!"

Again opening the door, he shuffled back to his bedroom, the chill and excitement reacting painfully on his swollen feet.

"Take off your boots," I whispered, rejoining

Miss Tremenheere, "and come through the picture-gallery. Sir Burleigh is ill, so the others will have to postpone their visit." We stole up hand-in-hand, bootless, and made a hurried tour of the pictures; and, only lingering on the landing long enough to slip our shoes on again, went to rejoin Blount and the General.

"I'm sorry you've had such a comfortless visit." I made my apology generally, in the dining-room. "Sir Burleigh regrets it too, but requests me to say he is too ill to stand on ceremony, and trusts to your great kindness to excuse him."

"Certainly, certainly!" said Blount, mellowed now with wine. "I don't care a straw about pictures, and I'm not sure that we didn't enjoy Lord Clifford's absence better than his presence."

The General gave a slight, rather wistful bow, in token of acquiescence with his friend's views but the not seeing the pictures evidently weighed on him, though he said: "We have enjoyed our visit very much—thanks to Miss Rohan!"

"Good-bye, dear Miss Rohan!"

Miss Tremenheere kissed me affectionately before remounting. "You have had a difficult part to play."

"Trust her!" said Blount, springing on his

horse. "Good-bye, Helen Rohan! Give a portion to seven, and also to eight—for that is a maxim of stewardship."

And I thought, as I took his offered hand "'What hath the wise man more than the fool? . . . for this also is vanity!'"—standing on the steps as they slowly rode off.

The ragged rain-cloud held them in chase, and, at a bend of the road, the long lines of rain overtook them with a swirl and a rush, which they answered by freeing the reins and galloping swiftly away from Burleigh Manor.

I had not long settled to my work again when milord came in, shaking the raindrops from his coat, his shaggy, tawny hair agleam with them. He was laughing grimly to himself, but only saluted me with a nod before paying a duty-visit to Sir Burleigh.

On his re-entrance, an ominous sullen silence held him. The swift scraping of my pen went on making small music to the pouring rain without.

"I suppose your guests are about home by now?" he said at length, lounging to the fireplace. "I mean Tremenheere and his daughter, and Blount."

"I know whom you mean. Are you angry at their civil reception? They told me they came

by your invitation, so I thought if no one was civil in your absence you would be vexed. It would seem you are now."

"Who? I? Not at all!" said Clifford. "Not in that narrow sense. I suppose you acted for the best—only I wish you had shown more discretion in not interfering at all, either way. Your innocent Misses are d——d presuming, and do things an old woman of the world would shrink from daring to do. You will have put me, and still more Sir Burleigh, in such a—a—in short one or other of us will be credited with you. If you must gape, open-mouthed, with a pen in your hand for my meaning—"

"My dear Verney, I gaped because I am tired of writing. Will you mend this pen?

"Give it here!" said he sullenly, opening his penknife. "Anyhow, you won't have the chance again; so we had better say no more about it."

"You may please yourself!" I took the pen. "But, if I were you, I should be glad my friends met with civility."

"It is, on the whole, perhaps lucky for me they came," he sneered, or the farce might have been a tragedy—'The Lost Inheritance; or, An Auld Man's Love.' Was Blount civil to you?"

"Fairly!"

"That's a wonder, considering he saw you

coming out of M'Causland's room at the Barracks at twelve o'clock at night—in a dream—is it possible? And," pursued Clifford, in a fury, "and that he thinks Fernie Tremenheere a snowdrop of purity, as it behoves his wife to be."

"Probably he does not let abstract considerations weigh against the blue '17 claret," I respond calmly, rather amused at milord's ruffled fur.

"It's likely not!" The amiable Verney cast about for a bigger stone. "And when men have shares in a mine, it's not policy to cry it down."

"Isn't it?" I reply meekly, "Is he fishing for a premium on his shares? Or what is it interests you in Colonel Blount's ventures?"

"I want the mine myself," he said sullenly, pursuing rather some thought of his own than my metaphor.

"Otra tigra!" I shrug, "there, there! what's the good of quarrelling with such small deer as Blount? All he thinks of is the wine, and you think of all sorts of pretty things to say to me—pretty, striped Clifford!"

"I'd stripe you infernally, if you were my wife!" muttered Clifford with a little laugh, regaining his usual placidity like a big cat

when it has sharpened its claws against a silk chair in a drawing-room, and got a half-reproving caress.

"I lunched at Letchford," he went on confidentially. "I sent for M'Causland, and told him you were here for the day; if he wanted to write a note, my groom should bring it you."

"What a great gulf!" I say, amused at the elaboration of the indignity. "And then to jump over it and come to its Helen's feet! Gracias tigra!"

"I'll gracias tigra you!" milord laughed outright, kicking off his damp boots and stirring the fire.

"Now, don't say I shouldn't make a good husband." He wheeled a chair to the fire and sat down. "I'm going to sleep. The wind, the rain, and the devil have been too much for me." And, leaning his great tawny head back, he was soon sound asleep, lulled by the warmth, and soothed by the noise of the rain falling in steady torrents from the cold white sky outside.

Silence again!—deep, deep silence! These human emotions ruffled only the surface. These comings and goings of indifferent people were no more to me than the gnats rising from its waters are to a river—running its appointed course to some unknown sea.

I ought to have been burning with indignation at Blount's coarse free-speech; I ought to have been swallowed up in one great blush at Sir Burleigh's conduct; I ought, when Verney Clifford accused me and blackened my name, to have shaken the dust from my feet, and left the ledgers for ever unfinished.

"I ought," smiles the river, "to stop and listen to the shrilling gnats, but my course may not be stayed by voices, and my goal is the sea."

* * * * *

My duties done, I lingered on my homeward way; the moon shone out from ragged, hurrying, rain-clouds. The dead wet ferns bedraggled my skirts, and the soppy park-turf soaked through my silk boots. Torn tufts of of discoloured primroses peered up through drift dead leaves. The mere, full of inky rain-water, looked like Phlegethon set to cool in a desert-park.

There were no deer on Burleigh Manor—herds of swine oftentimes in autumn to fatten on the acorns and beech-mast; sheep always; but no merely ornamental parties like deer, which give haunches of unprofitable lean meat, and spoil the grazing and make lean entries in ledgers.

"No deer! no deer!"

I repeated this musingly once or twice, pausing on the brink of the mere in the moonlight, listening to the shrill cry of herns and black waterhens; listening to the sullen plunging of pike gorging the disturbed and dancing minnows.

"You fools!" I said to the minnows, aloud, "why did you let the sudden increase of riches tempt you from the stale shallows, where was safety, to the deep, where was the lower depth of a pike's hungry cavernous mouth?"

"Suppose yourself"—a voice came from among the trees near—"Suppose yourself a minnow!" I looked round, but could see no one—the clouds closed up the moon-rays. I stopped to listen.

"Suppose yourself stranded in a stale shallow! A freshet is tempting enough sometimes!"

I could see now an outlined figure stretched on a heap of dead fern, whose wetness saved it from ignition by the red ashes dropping from a pipe held sideways between the speaker's lips.

"Yes," I replied, dipping one foot deep into the black water, to steady my nerves from a a sudden tremor at discovering a presence so near. "Yes, allegories are always incomplete, but they sound well. One is always tempted to address the vulgar in parables."

"Minnows, then, are the mob?" said the speaker, righting his pipe. "That is partly, no doubt, why the pike eat 'em. One can't feel for an impersonal body—by— It's wet here. Aren't you afraid I shall get rheumatism?"

"I think it possible," I replied. "But then *you* will catch it."

"I am answered!" he said ironically, removing his pipe, and bowing as well as his recumbent posture allowed. "You are philosophical. What is your name?—if one may ask Platonically."

"Helen Rohan."

"Helen Rohan—then—tell me are there not soldiers quartered not far off?"

"Yes, at Letchford, seven miles from here."

"Any friends of yours amongst them?"

"Two of them are my friends; one I am going to punish, if I ever get the chance."

"Ah! indeed? What is the quality of his offence? A malevolent indifference? Pardon me, I am but jesting—stoicism is a choking morsel to swallow when one is suffering as you are perhaps."

"You are a trifle too *zélé* with your creed," I reply. "The cause should precede the effect, and, the suffering being now existent, the stoicism is uncalled for."

"Then I have taken a too gloomy view of your presence here," he said. "Ah, God! I wish that creature existed who could, by any force of imagining, dive below the depth *I'm* in."

He muttered this to himself, and, stretching one arm above his head, pillowed his face on it, as though to conceal it from the now brilliant moonlight; whilst the pipe, thrown aside, sent up a thin wreath of smoke for a moment and then went out.

"A Jacobite, for a thousand!" I muttered, looking down with some scorn on the recumbent figure. "How will he aid his cause when he is crippled by rheumatism, through lying on the wet ferns of Burleigh Manor? Better to keep the most indifferent machine in working order. It might be useful, but a zealot is ever too ready to shirk hard, everyday work in favour of sentimental martyrdom. We cannot all be eaten by tigers for our faith."

I turned to this moonstruck recumbent form, and spoke ironically:

"If you are a Jacobite, as your foolish conduct betokens, you should know that a cripple in a small guerilla force is a nuisance, and go beg a night's lodging at the Hall—*pour servir la cause*—

"*De droit?*" he concluded, raising his head and looking at me keenly.

"As to that, whichever we choose to uphold is right in our own eyes."

"Is Sir Burleigh a Jacobite?" Still lazily reclining, reluctant to quit the easy and graceful *rôle* of martyr, and go a-begging as I had suggested, he raised himself on his elbow, careless, now, that a full white flood of moonlight was on his face. "What chance of a lodging, if I adopt your counsel?"

"I don't deal in hopeless counsel," I reply, still half-scornful. "There are enough theorists in the world clinging to that wretched fool Stuart. One or two who would adopt the Socratic *mot d'ordre*, 'Action,' were worth a thousand."

"Then *I* will adopt it. The fern is infernally wet—is drawing all the heat out of me. I feel premonitory symptoms of begging—let me practise. Give me a night's lodging for charity, if not for shame, my dear—after counselling me to ask it."

He sprang up and stood beside me, looking down into my face. A pale-faced, haggard, and miserable-looking man, with that sort of pseudo-Stuart look a good deal adopted by the younger followers of the Pretender, who cultivated

pallor, smock faces and long hair, in hope to be mistaken for the real Stuart, and cared less for their cause than for personal notoriety.

"You are welcome to a night's lodging in one of our barns," I replied to his request, coldly, "if you have no wish to disturb Sir Burleigh. Milord is there too. He is for Hanover."

"Counsel me," he said, mockingly. "Is it wiser to sleep on straw, or risk an ally by putting him out of temper?"

"Sleep on straw, make any reasonable sacrifice for your cause, but abjure folly. Even in trifles like rheumatism, clean fresh straw is lodgings for a prince, if princes were wise."

"There is something wholesome in your counsel even if it be homely," he smiled. "You see, if I went to the Hall to night it would be 'The beggars are coming to town' with a vengeance. Moonlight aggravates a troublesome visitor. To-morrow morning all the disagreeable will come in fresh and find him prepared. Milord away at Letchford also, so I hear. Shall I sleep on straw—tell me now!—or stop and talk to the fishes in the moonlight? I would not believe it real when I heard you. I had been dozing—your voice awoke me; my mind was made up for a damp lodgment. The question is—I'm confoundedly tired!—whether I can walk to said

straw. I thought myself anchored here, but the devil never will leave one alone. His never failing bait—a woman."

"Since you see so clearly through his devices," I reply, "it is not policy to fall in with them."

"Ah! isn't it? by St. George!" he answers quickly, with a grin. "It means pleasure for the minute, the only friend I have! Lead on to your straw. I'm sure I shall be happy there, without prejudice to your angelic charity for the suggestion."

"I led on, through moonlit dells of dewy mist, through the huge dark oak-forests, and many vistaed glades, past flocks of sleeping sheep dotted over all the land, a fleecy wealth — and throughout all that long walk, hearing his footsteps close behind me, we neither uttered a word until, passing through the large gates, the key of which I carried as McCausland's deputy, the Jacobite paused to examine the florid stone carvings on the high pillars supporting them.

"A good old English family, the Burleigh Cliffords!" he said, tracing out one of the many bas-relief shields with his finger. "Pity Sir Burleigh remains unmarried, and a wonder too!" He turned to me with the same half-insolent look and smile. "It is sometimes good policy

to ask, and it shall be given thee. Don't you think so, most wise mistress?"

"Not to ask if you don't want it," I reply, with a shrug. "Old-age and infirmities generally come without asking."

"And parks and manors too? But there is the heir to all this—Milord Clifford. Is he a Jacobite?"

"I am not in Lord Clifford's political confidence," I reply, anxious to speak the truth. "I am the steward's daughter—or niece, rather."

"A thousand to one you both forget that sometimes. Ah! I know Milord Verney. A bar-sinister should be no bogie to him, if all reports are true about his precious parentage."

I resumed my way, treading the familiar field-paths swiftly, rather scornful of the talk of this self-invoked Jacobite incubus, for he had not denied being one.

"*Sans cérémonie*," he laughed a little bitterly as he hurried to overtake me. "Where is your barn? I see a house, but no farm-buildings. Where is it?" his tone was slightly suspicious, and doubting.

"Not so far off." I went swiftly, whilst he strode with quick uneven steps beside me, until we entered the home-close meadow, where the wood-pile stood, and the shed which sheltered

the white calves. I myself carried these creatures their food every morning:—thinking of this, I stopped.

"If you could manage here the night, I would bring you breakfast unremarked.

I looked at him, doubtful of the propriety of lodging a fellow-being amongst cattle. In spite of Scripture there is something abhorrent in the dirt and damp of a cattleshed—better the clean brack by the mere. There was, it was true, plenty of dry straw here.

"Ah, it is harder than you thought, Helen Rohan," he smiled. "These are difficulties it requires a divinity to get over, or an Eastern climate to legitimatise."

"Is there anything like a halo round my head? There is still the barn." I resumed my way in some vexation, and enter cautiously through the farmyard-gates.

Not so cautiously but that five or six sheep-dogs and curs of various uses awoke, and rushed to us as to a centre, yelping vociferously.

"I will not be foiled every way." I took up a flail lying handy against the wall of a cow-house, and gave a liberal allowance of blows amongst them, pursuing them, like an Orestes suddenly turned at bay amongst the Furies, to their various retreats.

It was not often I was roused to wrath by any created things. These wretched whining curs turning against one who had ever bestowed food and caresses on them, stung me beyond endurance. The clamour was soon stilled, awaking none of the heavy-eyed servants—who perchance heard it in their dreams. "I am furious," I said, returning and throwing down the flail.

"I did not know anger was such fiery wine as it is. It must be good to be a fool sometimes; they have everything, *ces messieurs*—anger, love, revenge!"

"I think you will find the barn comfortable. You need fear no interruption. To-morrow is our cattle-market, and all our men will be away early. You will not smoke, will you?"

"No, I will not smoke."

"On your word?"

"On my honour."

We were standing against the large flapping door of the barn, which, seized now and again by a gust of wind from without, tried strenuously to shut itself, pushing us before it with irresistible force, until coming to the flail-board, we opposed ourselves as a wedge to its closing, when it would swing creaking back a few feet preparatory to another rush. So long as we were there, it was imperative on us to follow it, lest we

should be cracked like two nuts in its closing. We paced to and fro as solemnly as though dancing a minuet—sometimes in light, sometimes in shadow. The farmyard, knee-deep in littered straw, silvered by the moon—which now rode high above the housetop—seemed untenanted; the dogs had burrowed into the litter, mindful of the reception accorded to their zeal. The very tiles seemed steeped in sleep—blanketed with moss and house-leek. Only the driven clouds flying before the wind, leaving patches of stars and blue sky, were awake.

"You must go in now," I said in a pause, a lull of wind, a flood of the brilliant white light. "Good-night; sleep well!"

"As well as I can—be sure of that." He went in, and I entered the house, as usual, unremarked—for no bolts were drawn as a general thing, and entrances were numerous, giving always the certainty of finding one, at least, open. It was a thiefless place, as there was nothing much to thieve; and the dogs, though now invisible, were vigilant and fierce. In the morning they would be gone with their charges of cattle; so my charge, the Jacobite, was safe from their attentions, even though my introduction were forgotten by them.

The next morning I was up betimes, and,

taking some provision to the barn, called to the Jacobite. He was gone.

"Ungrateful and impatient!" I mutter, going on my way, for I was again due at the Hall. "And I to hide you as a Crown jewel. What have you stolen in your retreat? A white calf, perchance!"

No! I counted them dotted over the meadow —four. He had only taken away his valueless self.

Yet I frowned, feeling vexed that he had lost the good breakfast I had brought him. I took it back to the yet-uncleared table, and then walked leisurely on my way to the Hall—passing the mere, lest I should miss any trace or tidings of him, an avowed Jacobite I had never before seen.

As I ran up the steps, I heard Sir Burleigh's voice, in querulous tones, coming from the study; and, thinking no other than that he was rating Clifford, opened the door and entered.

The dark-blue blind was half-down; wine and the remains of breakfast were on the table.

Sir Burleigh had apparently been holding a monologue-discourse; yet his brows were bent sternly, and his broad wrinkled face was flushed, his manner disquieted—uneasy.

"Well, Helen, my girl!" His tones were kinder than usual. "Come with the gear, eh? What are your politics, my lass? I was telling them with a friend of mine, and actually drove him into a corner, and shoved the screen against him. Go and dig him out—a fox! he wants to hear our secrets."

"He is very welcome to my share; it is all of facts and figures, Sir Burleigh."

"So is mine, Helen Rohan! so is mine!" he rejoined, "but it is not much good, apparently. I'm so stiff with rheumatism, I can scarcely move." My pensioner of last night emerged from the screen, and came forward—a pale-featured, handsome face:

"Is this your steward, Sir Burleigh?"

"Ay!" chuckled Sir Burleigh. "I'll promote her one day to groom of the bedchamber—eh, Helen?"

"As the day is, so is the strength of refusal," I said, turning out my pocket and drawing a chair to the table. Sir Burleigh was his own banker, keeping all his money in gold and silver at the Hall, as was then generally done, especially by those disaffected with the Government of the Hanover-man. I had brought the price of a week's sales, which I began to count, his head keeping time with a rhythmical motion

whilst I accounted for the various sums. "Right to a fraction!" Sir Burleigh locked the gold into a bureau, and I rose.

"Now, don't run away." He signed to me to reseat myself. "I'm going to hear the rights of your Jacobite meddling. You need not put on your hypocrite impassiveness. Who was the fellow who slept——"

"In the barn?" interrupted the guest hastily.

"Oh, oh! you've agreed on a tale, I see!" Sir Burleigh chuckled. "Well, better a bed of straw with good company, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

"Who was he, Helen Rohan?"

"I don't know that anyone slept in the barn," I reply, putting the stopper in the decanter.

"Isn't she a Jesuit? Isn't she a cool Popish plot?" said Sir Burleigh. "Ah, well! if he did not sleep, I daresay there was a good reason for it. Eh, Helen Rohan? Oh, you need not feel in your pocket for more money. I wouldn't let you off a roasting for a hundred pound. Besides I've got my money."

"What am I waiting for?" I asked.

"Never you mind," nodded Sir Burleigh, "you do as you're told, you minx. You're not so afraid of me as a rule. It is whitewash, milord!" He turned to the guest, adding: "She

had two soldiers here yesterday, roistering and feasting. A precious good job you asked them, Helen, under present conditions. Eh, milord?"

"Yes, exceedingly fortunate; anything like brusqueness or avoiding them, might be misinterpreted just now, to our hurt."

"I hope you treated them well, Helen," said Sir Burleigh, anxiously, "and made my excuses handsomely. Gout, you know, would excuse a king. Did you give them wine enough?"

"Blount had three bottles, sir; and General Tremenheere as much as made him forget the pictures he came to see."

Both laughed at this, Sir Burleigh saying:

"Pictures be d——d! A handsome wench is worth them all; and there's a picture here, if it comes to that, whose white silk skin, red lips, and fine eyes are worth them all—ay, the whole lot!"

I turned to see which of the portraits had been brought down for this eulogium, but was astonished to find that I myself was its object—the blue eyes of the guest and the fierce grey ones of his host being fixed on me.

I believe I blushed—but with anger; and, speaking like St. Peter, at random, to cover my confusion and escape their scrutiny, I asked if I might be guide to the gallery, and show

the gentleman the pictures, almost unknowing what I said.

"You may so," said Sir Burleigh graciously, taking his visitor's compliance for granted. The guest laughed good-naturedly, and followed me leisurely from the study, upstairs to the picture-gallery.

"You can see them yourself," I said ungraciously, when we were in the gallery. "I'm tired." And I seated myself in a deep-cushioned embrasure of one of the long range of windows, indignation still possessing me.

"So am I," he returned. "Shall we return to Sir Burleigh?"

"I think not," I said, as indifferently as I could, rising. After all, he meant no harm. "Do you like portraits? Come and see my favourite." I held out my hand to conduct him, and he bent his knee to the floor and kissed it respectfully. This (being past surprises now) I received calmly, and soon we were lingering along the fine gallery, so silent and yet so filled with life—the life of bygone generations. We both spoke in the subdued tones which seem proper to pictures and books, as though our extreme vitality in presence of their calm were a wrong.

About the centre of the line, I paused, and

waited to see if my favourite would attract the unprompted attention of the Jacobite.

It was a half-length portrait of a woman—a sad, pale face, still as death, under its white head-wrap, which was so contrived as to conceal all but the face itself. Not a softening lock of hair escaped that stiff and rigid covering of dead-white; one slender hand was lying free and listless outside, as though praying for the clasp of absent fingers; her deep mournful eyes seemed to be looking in a future without hope or love; in the beautiful mouth there was a look as though all its sensitive nerves were strained, and swerving from some bitter words which yet were hardly heeded. There was an air of apprehension in the expression, as of one waiting for, yet welcoming, death.

My eyes filled with tears when I looked on her—and I had so gazed hundreds of times, always with a like result; to-day they fell on to my furred pelisse. It was otter's-fur, and waterproof, however; and, by turning away, I escaped being seen in so silly a mood.

The Jacobite gazed at her attentively, held, apparently, by the same fascination which attracted me:—the living reality, the sensitiveness and refinement, the suffering and pathetic sorrow of the face.

"That was a cruel story," said he, "the story of that woman's life—Ay, 'Mistris to a King,' see the legend half-obliterated. Do you know her history, Helen Rohan?"

"No," said I, "no farther than that record of it. Do not tell me! Perhaps she was Rosamond Clifford, only she is not beautiful enough, and is, besides, too—too—gentle-looking. No one could offer poison to a woman who looked like that. It would be—would it not?—like offering it to a spirit."

"Yet," said he, "she endured the insults of a mob, the angry fanaticism of priests and nobles, the desertion of her lover—"

"Stop!" said I angrily. "Why did you tell me this? I desired you not. You have destroyed the picture for me: I had my own history of it."

Then, with some effort and in much indignation, I lifted it from its panel, standing it with its face to the wall.

"Heyday!" said he, unknowing the bitterness of my resentment at the destruction of my traditions. "What will Sir Burleigh say to this style of art-criticism?"

"Sir Burleigh knows, sir, that I have favourites here. It was only Verney who ever interfered with me before. He locked the gallery

once. Sir Burleigh opened it for me, and forbade his annoying me about it. That was when I was little—and just for spite," I added, in the country vernacular.

"Believe me," said the Jacobite, "I am sorry to have vexed you. I, too, am fond of pictures —living ones especially."

"That," said I, "is very fine, but the mischief is done." I walked away ungraciously. My occupation of guide gone, I went to one of the long range of windows and stood looking—not without at the bright morning—but within, at a chaos of new thoughts. It was new to see a stranger in the gallery, so long left in its fragrant silence, its peopled solitude. Yet, he somehow harmonised with it. It was as though one of the nobles of Titian stood out from the frame a living reality. The silence in which we now stood suited better my present mood than the petulancy of our small dispute anent the lady's portrait. I judged myself to have been absurd in entering into feelings he could not be expected to share—in expressing anger which to him would seem causeless. I could see that he, too, was thinking—no doubt in some amaze. As he stood, unheeding them, before the pictures—catching my eye, he came forward with a slight bow.

"When you are ready to leave the gallery, Miss Rohan, I shall have much pleasure in escorting you."

"This," thought I, "the rheumatic, pipe-smoking Jacobite? He is positively handsome!"

"Why should we quarrel?" he said, relenting as I looked at him. "I am for peace at any price. Blot out all my offences, Miss Rohan, I beseech you!"

"I have nothing to forgive, sir."

"And I have forgiven all, Helen Rohan—pardon this quaint way of using your name! Yet we do not say 'Signor Titian,' and 'Helen Rohan' seems somehow to suit you. It sounds like a title. Were your parents French?"

"I don't know," said I, crimsoning, as for the first time in my life they were spoken of to me. "I don't know who they were. M'Causland brought me up, such as I am," I added, bitterly, feeling it an inexpressible indignity that my name and parentage were at the mercy of any chance-allusion.

"It is a French name," said he, appearing not to note my embarrassment, "like my own, Louis Casimir. When we are better friends I hope you will call me Louis Casimir, without any prefix—I earnestly hope it. Helen, has any-

one ever told you that you are beautiful ? A rose in this wild place ! "

"No," said I, "besides which I do not want to be so. I do not want even to exist. Life is cruel, but it is luckily only a transient evil. I will give you my life," I added, jestingly, "to add on to yours, if you will provide me an easy and painless death."

"An *euthanasia*," he smiled. "But I do not like to see you melancholy. You were not so last night. You addressed the fishes quite briskly and oratorically, and were specially sarcastic and sincere to me. Let us go down and see what our old friend, Sir Burleigh, is about."

"Go ! " said I, my voice broken, my eyes filling with tears—unusual emotion, unwonted sympathy, melting the thin ice of stoicism and impassiveness, in which fate had led me to trust as a shield against hurts. "Leave me here awhile—I will soon come down."

"Let me stay," said he gently, taking my hand. "It is the least I can do, after your noble sympathy last night to a forlorn, proscribed wanderer."

"In those words, I am described," I thought. "A homeless, proscribed wanderer, an unclaimed daughter, a proscribed existence. This, then,

was the secret affinity between me and the pathetic story of the portrait:—known, my story might be subject of mob-insult, of priestly censure, of a lover's desertion." So exquisitely painful were these thoughts that, freeing my hand, both held to my face could not stop the fast-flowing tears, nor the presence of this stranger avail ought in changing the strong current of emotion his careless inquiry had originated.

He was neither impatient nor scornful of these apparently causeless tears—but sat by, grave and sympathetic, till, in surprise at so tender treatment, they ceased. "Come," said he, taking my hand, "I shall be blamed for this. So this is the little stoic, the cynic of the mere, the prime minister of the minnows, Sir Burleigh's handsome secretary, and a Jacobite's humane adviser and saviour from rheumatism! Yet not altogether so — for my arm is stiff and sore! Will you write some letters for me, Helen Rohan, if Sir Burleigh allow it?"

I agreed, and, taking together a turn or two in the gallery, we repaired to the study, where Sir Burleigh was wondering at our long absence.

"You have a fine collection, Sir Burleigh," said the Jacobite cheerfully, "some excellent Titians."

"Yes," was the careless answer. "I am glad they please you sir—I know very little of them, and care less; but for their market value and being heirlooms, the cedar panelling of the gallery would please me just as well. Helen is their guardian and admirer."

"So I found, Sir Burleigh. But I have no time to spare; those letters must go to-night, or Sergius will be anxious. Question—who is to write? my arm is very stiff, I can scarce lift it."

"She'll do it," said Sir Burleigh, indicating me; and, pouring out wine for us all, he signed to me to come forward. "Why!" said he in surprise, "have you seen a ghost in the gallery? What does this mean, Casimir?"

"Some tame nightmare among the pictures!" he responded. "It affected us both equally."

"Which of the d——d things is it?" said Sir Burleigh, irritably. "I'll have it taken down. What end is answered by such dismal daubs? Which is it, Helen?"

"I don't know," said I, in terrible embarrassment. In spite of the warmth and potency of the wine, I felt like fainting. It was so seldom I suffered any feeling to gain a footing, that the indulgence this morning was costing me dear.

With a growl of dissatisfaction at the uselessness of paintings, Sir Burleigh let the subject

drop, and glided, with his friend, into political matters; all of us drinking more wine than was good for us—I, because Sir Burleigh insisted on it, saying Clifford port, if it could not chase gout, could at least send away ghosts. Presently Sir Burleigh left the room, re-entering with his hands full of papers, recent gazettes, letters, Government proclamations—over these they rustled and whispered. Sir Burleigh said that "Tom Pelham was a d——d fool!" and snapped his fingers whenever his name recurred. I wondered who Tom Pelham was, and sat dipping my pen in ink, listening, and thinking, as well as the wine would let me. Suddenly, a packet of letters was flung me, with orders to copy them fair. I gladly settled myself to work. Slowly the buzzing of the beeswing-port evanished, leaving only its grateful warmth and sustaining strength. Once fairly on my old track, my usual calm serenity returned as though it had never been ruffled, and I thought, with a smile: "If I have been a fool, it is only once in a way; and 'Tom Pelham is a born fool! a d——d fool! a hopeless fool!'"

The letters were long, badly-written, full of involved sentences and parentheses; and, so engrossed did I become over them that both Sir Burleigh and the Jacobite left the room un-

remarked, though I strove to let no more of my thoughts rest on them than just sufficed for the copying. Yet I had not acquired enough of the *vis inertiæ* of secretaryship not to have some idea that these were dangerous documents for Sir Burleigh to sanction. And, on hearing the approaching step of Verney Clifford, I thrust the letters into my pocket—blotting a fair copy I had made, and opened a big account-book lying on the table.

"What are you doing here?" said Milord, in a sour fashion. "It seems to me a little malingering is going on over these books, to end by someone being sold—and rather under price, too. Give me that book!"

"*Pourquoi?*" I asked, stretching my arm carelessly over it and holding it firmly.

"Never you mind what for!" He came and wrested it from me by main-force, turned over the leaves like a jealous husband searching for hidden love-billets; and after shaking, it terrier-fashion, by the covers, returned it with a disappointed oath.

"If I thought you were playing me false," he said fiercely, "imperilling the Manor by any aid in Sir Burleigh's Jacobite foolery, I would hunt you away from the Hall—ay, if need were, with the dogs!"

"That would be unpleasant. So, when the Hall is yours, I will stop away, milord."

"The Hall is mine now—to all intents and purposes. Don't caress my dog! the d——d brute is too friendly to you as it is." He gave it a resounding kick for spite, at which it howled pitifully—its hot, stinking breath seeming to scorch my face like a blast from a furnace.

"What does this *display* of brutality mean, Verney?"

"A mask removed!" Verney was beside himself with baffled fury. "I *hate* you and your clan. All my time is taken up to counteract the schemes of a dirty, cheat-the-gallows Scot and a designing—ay a— Don't look at me with your unabashed colourless effrontery! A lily's very well, but is soon told from a carrion-flower."

"By a botanist," I append, with a shrug. "Why am I a victim to these pessimist views of life, Tigra?"

He hesitated a moment; then, his wrath abating, came near and held out his hand—the nearest thing he knew to expressing an apology. I took it, somewhat amused at the sudden calm. "Then you are not engaged in any of this tomfoolery, Helen?"

"None!—on my life!" said mendaciously the

serpent, whom the eel was trying to cozen. As he sat down beside me, I plaited some of his tawny hair into inextricable knots, to punish him when he should next essay to comb them. "Did you think it possible, dear Verney?"

"What are you 'dear-Verneying' me for, and being so uncommonly kind about?" he asked suspiciously. "Are you sprinkling white arsenic on my hair?"

"We do use it for the sheep," I said, pushing him away, "but it's too expensive for hair-powder." Then we heard Sir Burleigh coming, and were silent.

"Bad news! bad news!" Sir Burleigh carried a gazette. "I tell you, Verney, it will *be* bad news so long as *he* has no followers but old men. Why don't you follow your father's steps?"

"You mean in the Jacobite cause, sir? I'll see my father d——d before I follow in the dance that lost him his head. So long as you choose to belong to it, for so long I am neuter. When you give it up as hopeless, let me know; and by—the next week shall see me the richer by thirty thousand."

"Keep to your d——d Hanover!" Sir Burleigh's teeth set grimly, and Clifford replied by striding from the room and slamming the door.

"He would be worth a regiment—a regiment."

Sir Burleigh crumpled the gazette in his hand, and then, spreading it open on the table, pored over the account of one of those small engagements that were so disastrous to the Pretender's cause—ignominious strivings against superior and crushing forces, comparable only to the struggles of an entrapped animal; whilst I resumed my interrupted copying, and, having given the letters into Sir Burleigh's hands, who scarce lifted his head to receive them, went home.

It was a day of blue unclouded sunshine, and I paused on the edge of the mere to watch the herons stalking about in the rippleless water, only a faint sense of languor and hunger marring the pleasantness of the rest and warmth —a sense that I should be happier if I could lie face downward in the lapping water and wake again no more, smiled on for ever by the sky, sighed over for aye by the oak-forest near at hand. I had no portion in this life, either of pleasure or of pain.

CHAPTER V.

An unwonted noise of angry voices rang out from the parlour as I passed in from the farm-yard. The labourers were all away, driving cattle; Elizabeth, in the stable, talking to her lover, the horse-boy, who was grooming my uncle's roadster. Only Elsie, deaf and taciturn, sat knitting in the chimney-corner. She lifted up her face, with something of a malicious expression on its thin Scotch features, and said, pointing to the parlour:

"Master Alexis, he be come home, Helen Rohan; an' a rare soldier, too! There's a kintra clatter gaun on the day—let those hear it that may. I thank the Lord I canna hear the sodger-aiths he's aye swearin' sae loud an' deep. It is something about a woman. Eh! to be wived in ae week, is a gran' stroke, but ye maun nae be nice about beauty or gudeness."

A terrible sensation crept over me. Was this muttering old hag proclaiming truly the casting-away of Alexis—his ruin, body and soul? Had he, in very madness or drunkenness, so disgraced himself? A fresh outburst of furious words

from the parlour, in M'Causland's voice, seemed to confirm the truth that something dreadful had occurred. I went in, shutting the door to behind me. In the tall soldier standing by the hearth, I only half-realised Alexis. Yes, there—there, by the window, was a woman. She turned at my entrance, looking at the whole scene with indifference and hardihood—a repulsive, gaudily-dressed, vicious, and dreadful presence.

"Tell yer ain story," said M'Causland, in a strange subdued and dreary tone. "Helen, this is Sandy, the lad we loved—your husband, with patience and God's blessing! Give him up, now, girl! Yon is his choice!"

He pointed to the woman, who curtesied and blinked as at a formal introduction. Sandy, his elbow on the high mantel, had an angry, lowering, and vengeful frown on his face. He looked as though he had but recently recovered from hard-drinking—handsome, sullen, dissipated.

"I have come"—said he, fixing his eyes on me; then stopped, caught his breath with a sort of sob, and went on. "I have come, Helen—I swore I would. A bad woman—the very worst—is better than a devil, such as you. Yes, a devil—this is your work! Are you satisfied—pleased?"

"I am disgusted," said I in a low rapid tone that she might not follow nor hear. "I disclaim being cause of so vile a degradation. Say it is but a wild threat, Sandy, for God's sake!"

"Yes," said M'Causland, clasping his hand, "say so laddie—Helen will have you—dinna ye ken women are aye strange to their best lovers —sayin' no an' meanin' yes?"

"It is too late," said Alexis, with an ashen face. "She put me in hell, and there I must stay. Helen! Helen! answer for my broken heart, my rived soul, if ye can—if ye dare; but do not mock me!"

"Mock!" wailed M'Causland. "Lad, this is the mockery of hell! I would rather see you dead!—to your cousin, you must be. Go frae her sight!—her face should hae haunted an' kept ye from this."

"I tell you," said Alexis fiercely, "it hunted me on—on; that woman yonder is a woman; Helen is a devil—pitiless, merciless, a torturing fiend! I loved her, and, for sport, she has broken my life—dragged me to the dust!"

His fierce eyes rested on mine, which met them with steadfast scorn and defiance, for his falsely accusing me. How the brown Highland eyes contracted with voiceless rage and anguish as I looked into them! I could imagine Alexis,

in this silent, demoniacal possession, stabbing an enemy to the heart—his hand even by force of hereditary instinct grasped his dirk. The blind fury of blood was on him. I shuddered to think, should Clifford enter, how it would then be assuaged.

This silent scene lasted perhaps a few seconds of time; yet in it years of knowledge, of fear, of hate and anguish, were expressed. I felt then verily guilty of some of the sin he charged to me.

"Sandy," said I, crossing over and taking his arm, to free myself from that terrible glance, "forgive me!"

"When it comes to that." A terrible tainted voice spoke. The woman whom we had forgotten.

"When it comes to that, Miss, he's my husband, please ye; but I'm agreeable if some whiskey is providit free. I don't grudge a cast-off sweetheart a kiss an' good-bye—not me! I'm not one o' the jealous sort! Ask the regiment! ask Blount—he's the Colonel—there's not a peaceabler woman amongst them."

The whine in which she uttered this self-laudation entered like a loathsome poison into one's ears. There was extremest self-abasement, but not humility—falseness, without cause,

unfathomable. I felt Alexis tremble like a leaf—all his fierceness gone.

"Give her whiskey," I said to M'Causland, who mutely and shuddering obeyed me, carrying it into the kitchen, whence I saw old Elsie retreat, as from a pestilence, as the woman followed him. Free from this dreadful presence, we stood like two creatures, one of whom is doomed to death. Poor Sandy was trembling as in presence of a dark fate. The wretched woman had seated herself before the kitchen fire, apparently oblivious of every good but physical comfort. I could not, till the door closed between us, take my eyes from her movements. From her they withdrew to Sandy. The very antipodes of her moral and physical degradation, he stood by the hearth. None of the Romans of whom he used to read could have presented a finer, a more commanding presence; even in his wrath, in his despair, and the vengeance he had planned, there was evidence, not of subtlety, of invention, or native malice, but of boyish rage, of unreasoning, unreflective anguish. The pity of it—of this self-sacrifice—filled my heart with bitter pain. "Sandy," said I hating to reproach him—willing to take all, his suffering on myself, "do not persevere in hating me so. If you knew how I suffer, you

would forgive me." He trembled, but did not reply—his anger was just ebbing. I took his hands and kissed them—those hard, strong hands, which all my life had helped me, and which now were so palsy-stricken by emotion. "Give up this wretched vengeance." I drew his unresisting head down to my arms. "Surely you would not disgrace me? You think me cruel, yet I love you. Your grief is mine, your interests are mine; have some pity for me." I kissed his face, heavy tears were answering my appeal, his arms clasped me with convulsive strength. All the better part of his love for me was prompting him to confession, to repentance. I felt the faint, heavy throbbings of his heart as he strove to speak, but no words would come through the inarticulate tempest of his emotions. A moment, and he had been rescued. Horror!—the door opened, and preceded by an indefinable exhalation—like what could be imaged to be that of a moral miasma—the "vengeance" in bodily shape approached. Hiccoughing and laughing she took my arm. I felt as though some loathsome animal touched me, and shuddered away from him in retreating from her. What she said is too horrible to be even imagined. Alexis, stunned by the transition, stood appalled and helpless. Apparently

enjoying the advantage of an audience, torrents of unimaginable language poured from her lips. The whiskey has loosened her tongue, the silence encouraged her.

In the midst of it, unheard, unheeded, Sir Burleigh came in. One glance seemed to possess him of the situation, and raising his riding switch he brought it down sharply over her shoulders, with force enough to bring her vile eloquence to an abrupt stop.

"Get out," he said, as though speaking to a dog, and motioning her to the door. The suddenness, the stern and commanding air of the speaker, the force of the well wielded whip, compelled her to obey, and she slunk out alarmed, eyeing his fierce countenance in vain for any meekness which would warrant her in re-commencing.

"Here, M'Causland," called Sir Burleigh, "what are you about? loose the dogs on her."

This sent her flying from the farm, pursued by Elizabeth with a stout broom; and we were alone, stunned, poisoned, yet, thank God, freed from so vile a presence.

"Eh!" said Sir Burleigh sardonically, "you are keeping good company, Helen Rohan; and you, sir," turning to the unhappy Sandy fiercely, "can you no better than bring such callets here?

By——you ought to be shot; you are a shame to manhood—a cur, sir."

"Sir," said I, ranging myself with Sandy, "you do not know the whole—pray cease talking; or go," I muttered aside, shame of it gnawing my very heart.

"Eh! Helen," said he, in surprise, "did you want her here?"

"No," said I, indignantly, "nor you either, if talk is to re-commence, abuse, indignity, falsehood. See if you can help me; if not, be silent and go." I felt my cheeks flame, and my eyes flash. Alexis cowered down in humiliation. I faced Sir Burleigh fiercely.

"Help you," said he, "my dear, yes. How, Helen?"

"I don't know, Sir Burleigh. Tell Sandy how he is to shake off that—that awful, terrible woman. He has married her." And weeping bitterly at the thought, I withdrew to the far end of the room.

"D'ye hear? Wake up, sir," said Sir Burleigh, roughly, to Alexis, "and listen. You, sir, are a young fellow—I am an old one. Take the counsel of a friend—at whatever cost, shake off that disgrace. I tell you that woman has ceased to be a human being. She is——"

"My wife," said Alexis, his insane fury reviv-

ing at sight of the hated Clifford—fury which battled with and overcame shame, mounting in dull crimson patches to his white face.

"My God!" said Sir Burleigh, aghast. "But listen, my lad. Is it likely she is your wife only? Give her a couple of guineas, she will confess to as many more husbands; get your proofs, and you are free. Come, I counsel you as I would my own, if they could be conceived to look on such carrion as yon. Here, free yourself," said he. "It will be easily managed. I will write a line to Blount. Take this." He drew two guineas from his pocket, and proffered them to him. "Come, my lad, for Helen's sake! give over this perversity."

Sandy remained silent, whether heeding or not I could not tell. I thought Sir Burleigh's counsel the inspiration of a god. Who but he would have thought of it? I was awe-struck at its wisdom and consummate knowledge of the world.

"Why did not Alexis speak, and thankfully avail of it to shake off his dreadful chain?"

"Come," repeated Sir Burleigh, persuasively, laying his hand on Alexis' shoulder. "This is not an uncommon folly, but, man alive! you have eyes, surely, and ears? Faugh! I am poisoned!"

Alexis, who was seated with down-bent head,

rose to his feet. In a voice whose strangeness and harshness made every word distinct, he said:

"I am poisoned! To listen to you, to see her,"—he pointed to me—"would poison a legion of eyes, of ears. I tell you that woman, vile and bad, is less vile than Helen Rohan—is, to her, what the worst living being is to a corrupt demon." Pushing back his hand, he strode past the astonished Sir Burleigh, and with his face disfigured and convulsed with passion, left the room and the house.

With an angry flush on his brow, Sir Burleigh sat for a few moments, on this savage rejection of his aid. Then, repocketing his guineas, rose and desired me to acquaint M'Causland that he was there.

"Never mind," said he, as I prepared miserably to go in search of him. "Come here, Helen! Now," he said, putting his hands on my shoulders and looking into my face, "has that hound Alexis ever said this to you before?"

"No," said I, miserably. "He is mad. Thank you for your help, sir. He is quite mad. Do not regard his words. He is not to answer for them."

"But I will, by ——!" said he, "and I warn him, if ever he set foot on my land again, I will have him chasséed off it like a wolf. What! I

am not safe from my own tenants? My own stewards? Doing my best for him too!"

"He meant Verney," said I, impatiently, shaking his hands from my shoulders. "Everyone thinks of themselves, Sir Burleigh. I am hurt by it, too." Retreating, I stood by the window, wroth at my own wrongs being considered less than nothing, prevailing over good counsel and gratitude. Thus for some moments we stood silent.

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh, crossing, in some little embarrassment, to where I stood, "forgive me, my dear, a word I must say to you."

"What is it?" said I, indifferently and scornful.

"'Tis about Mr. Casimir," said he. "You were better to have little to say to him except I am present. In showing him the picture-gallery you showed him a picture he has not forgot."

"Why," said I, getting scarlet as I remembered the little contention over the portrait —"Mistris to a King." "It was but that lady in white, sir. He would tell me her history, and I had a history of my own, which I preferred, and so was vexed with him."

"Exactly!" said Sir Burleigh, with dry emphasis. "That is the sort of thing which leads to other histories, and so on. Casimir is

not one, either, to let 'I dare not, wait upon I would.' It is possible I may want you at the Hall for writing, and I order you most specially to avoid him."

"Very well," I said indifferently, adding, impertinently: "He is but a Jacobite!"

"By ——!" said Sir Burleigh, indignantly. "Here is flat rebellion. This is but a *roué!* That is but a Jacobite! Who are you, madam?"

"I am only Helen Rohan," said I, meekly, but with an upward glance that brought a smile to his angry face.

"You are a handsome wench!" said he, "and ready-witted as a Frenchwoman." And, with this obliging speech, his eyes dwelt upon my face so long that I grew embarrassed—though it was but a speculative and no admiring glance, a glance as though to estimate what attraction—having none for him—I might have for others.

"Casimir," I thought, angrily, "the pied magpie! telling him about the portrait! The Jacobite tell-tale!" Other hard names I called him, the atmosphere being unwholesome with that sort of eloquence reprehended by St. Jude.

M'Causland came in ere long, prefacing his apology for his absence by a lament for Sandy.

"I know all that," interrupted his master, "a ne'er-do-weel nevvy is not so rare, M'Causland.

Save an' except the woman, milord is troublesome to me, as yours is to you. "Except the woman," he continued irritably, "the very thing I'm here about. Here's Verney gone daft off after a whey-faced beggar-woman by name Tremenheere! The very same," he added to me, "who came to the Hall with her father and Colonel Blount. I came over, Helen Rohan, to know is it not the case that she told you she was troth-plight to Blount? Verney denies it to be so."

"Yes, Sir Burleigh; she referred to her engagement several times as a settled thing, and Colonel Blount called her his wife and his life when he passed her the sauce-boat at luncheon."

"I knew it," said Sir Burleigh. "And now, since your memory is so good, pray, did not you tattle to and tempt her—like Satan tempting Sin—with milord's prospects and position?"

"No!" said I stoutly, "I only told her milord would have the Manor, the land, the ready-money, the plenishing, the pictures, and the prestige."

"The what?" he asked angrily.

"The glory," said I, giving the freest translation I could remember, "of being a Clifford."

"What is your object, mistress, in all this catalogue?"

"No special object, Sir Burleigh; but she seemed not to think much of the Manor—But, then, she is ignorant: she does not know a Velasquez from a Rembrandt!"

"Oh! the d——d pictures!" said he impatiently. "Mind you, I'll lock up that gallery and throw the key away. Here's a pretty coil brewed through it! Verney gone daft for Blount's troth-plight, a woman without a penny—a beggarly soldier's daughter, brought up in barracks—and I—I to have her and all her whimpering brats at the Hall when I have gout on me. That is the blessed prospect! But this madness shall be stopped—if I have to marry myself!"

"Gude Lord!" ejaculated M'Causland in dismay at this self-election of his master as scapegoat.

"With these parricides about us, M'Causland, there will be no help for it. We must get a counter-brood, and leave them to fight it out."

With the solemn announcement of this practical policy, and its grave reception by my uncle, so ludicrous a picture was conjured up of the Hall as a Champ de Mars for rival factions, that, against my will, I blurted into a little laugh.

"What is it to you, Helen Rohan?" said Sir

Burleigh, in apparent surprise, whipping his high-topped boots.

"Nothing, Sir Burleigh, except that I hope it won't happen. I like you best as you are, and the Manor too."

"Yes," he growled. "No running wild over the Hall, then, with a d——d woman there! No more port, Helen, or pictures. No, it is best as it is—eh, M'Causland?"

"Ou ay!" said M'Causland with a shrug, "we are peaceable, quiet folk, sir, an' no sayin' hoo a couple o' women-folk, in authority, wad brak up the blessed calm o' oor lives—as puir Sandy has wrecked his!"

"Yet something must be planned to stop Verney Clifford in his madness. Blount might have a hint writ him of this. Come back with me, Helen, I have, besides, other work for you."

"Ay, go!" said M'Causland, "it's weel ye shuld hae the sight an' the sound of yon painted callet out of yere mind. I must ride over," he said to me, aside, when Sir Burleigh had gone to mount his cob, "an' see if by any means Sandy can be saved. Blount gambles, they say. I must give him money to free the lad. It canna be a true marriage, as Sir Burleigh says."

"Yes," said I, "at any cost set him free."

"Don't talk to me o' ladies," said Sir Burleigh,

referring to his grievance as I walked beside the cob into the park-gates. "I tell you, milord must have money with his wife. And why you should have disobliged me by running him up to her, I can't make out."

"I don't think my words influenced her, sir. She said Blount was her father's choice, not hers, and did not seem to care for him much."

"And what the blessed host is there to care for in that villain Verney? You must ha' spoke fair of him—ay, like to like of his position—high enough—high as a cat in an empty garret. A nice thing for me! A spy in the land, and me with business on hand that would tax the ingenuity of the devil! Gout, too!"

Thus he was grumbling half to himself, as we went on in the brilliant spring sunshine, when the Jacobite came in sight. "There's another curst complication!" he sighed. Casimir here broke cover by. "And he will be taken!" He alighted as his guest came up, standing beside the cob, and bowing low as I had not seen him bow before. For this unwonted humility, I cast about for a cause, but could find none in the quiet presence of this tall, thin man.

"Sir," said Sir Burleigh, "is not this an unnecessary risk, being abroad in open daylight?"

"Where is the risk?" said he, carelessly, "in

this lonely park? I could not remain mewed up this fine day, and have met no one. Milord is still at Letchford, I hear."

"Yes, and like to be!" growled Sir Burleigh, his grievance recurring. "He is after another man's wife."

"Is it possible?" said the Jacobite, in a tone of civil regret, as though he expostulated with the higher powers that such thing were. Then, when Sir Burleigh had remounted, he waved him on. "I'll attend Miss Rohan in, Sir Burleigh; but, first, I am going to see the lake, and get her to show me the very spot I slept on the other night. I lost a ring, there, with a good stone in it."

"Umph!" said Sir Burleigh, discontentedly. "I shall be awaiting you, milord." He rode on, looking very stern at his advice being disregarded.

"What's the matter with him?" said Mr. Casimir. "Surely Verney Clifford can take care of himself? I'll take care of you, Helen." He held out his hand. I withdrew both mine into the furred cuffs of my pelisse, and led on to the lake, which was not far off, resolved to obey Sir Burleigh to the letter.

"There," said I, "is the place where you slept. What beauty or curiousness is in it?

Do you often make pilgrimages to such shrines?" (I did not believe in the story of the ring.)

"When I can get such guides, and no better excuse!" he laughed. "Besides, I wanted to talk to you, quite seriously. It is a pity to be at the mercy of chance meetings. Why cannot we arrange one? I have been thinking so ever since you went away, and blaming myself. I hoped to meet you."

This audacity amused me. Clearly, he thought I would willingly vary the monotony of country-life with a Jacobite lover.

"It was very good of you," said I, "but, if we occasionally meet at the Hall, I shall be satisfied—crammed, as you doubtless are, with excellences."

"About that, I don't know," said he, taking my hand, "but I am hungry as the sea for you. Ay, it is true! Does it take so long to love a rose, a gem, sunlight, or life? All excellence appeals to our hearts at once. Now, Helen, let us drop metaphor. If I am Casimir to everyone else, I will be myself to my sweet countrywoman. Dear, I am Charles Stuart. I tell you that you may know how scanty my time here will be—it may be a few days or a few hours—let me have assurance that you will not forget me!"

In amaze at this revelation, my eyes fixed on

his face, wondering I had not before surmised to whom those blue eyes and long features pertained. There were many Stuarts in this picture-gallery, and yet the likeness had escaped me. Recovering myself with the reflection that this was no reason for neglecting Sir Burleigh's orders against conversing with him alone, rather an added cause for strict obedience, I said: "I thank you, sir, for this confidence. I—I hope your cause will soon succeed."

This, uttered "lamely and unfashionably," was all, for the moment, that I could muster of words, but my eyes were, spite of me, busy scanning the features of the Jacobite. Not a doubt of the truth of this revelation entered my mind. Sir Burleigh's manner, though familiar, had been indefinably respectful to him. It even seemed as if in some degree I had been prepared for this—so little, after all, did it surprise me; possibly I had, unknown to myself, associated him with the Stuart portrait—otherwise, why should I be able to take so calmly an announcement the import of which to the country I well knew, as well as its danger to the Cliffords?

"You are a Jacobite," now said he. "You have written letters for, sheltered, comforted, aided, abetted me. Are you sorry for it, Helen Rohan?"

"No," said I, hanging my head, beginning—like the man in the parable, who had unduly elevated himself at the feast—with shame to take the lowest place.

"You," he continued gravely, "have declared me—contrary to King George, his crown and dignity—to be crammed full of excellences! You have canonised me, by declaring the ferns I slept on 'a shrine!' You have advised me how to govern, in your address to the minnows! You have given me information about the Guelph's troops at Letchford! And," he added, dropping his jesting tone, "I have trusted you with my life! How else," he went on, "could I convince you of my earnestness—my sincerity in desiring your friendship? To you I could not sail under false colours or come in a feigned name. Casimir, it is true, is my name: yet you have inspired me with a feeling that—that—in short it is happiness to me to interest you in my fortunes. If I thought we could not meet again, everything would be dreary and indifferent. When you spoke to me here—counselled me—my heart stirred at sound of your voice, I knew my fate stood beside me."

"Yet," said I, recovering somewhat from my awe, at this extravagance of homage, "you told me the devil had sent me to disturb you!"

At this anti-climax, he laughed heartily, professing immediately great penitence, as he could not see who I was, in the dark—forgetting his fate-theory.

"Ay," said he, "let us get comfortably back to everyday—I hate to be *en prince* to a pretty woman, and you are without doubt as lovely as Fayre Rosamond."

"Beautiful exceedingly!" said I. "I like quaint compliments best."

"Who pays you quaint compliments?" asked he suspiciously, "Sir Burleigh or Milord Clifford?"

"Milord's are rather quaint," I replied, thinking with some amusement of their variety and force, more especially of the "carrion flower," which, however, I did not rehearse. "And Sir Burleigh calls me a starched minx, a Bess o' Bedlam, and a jade. Now, shall we go to him?"

"Sir Burleigh seems your all-in-all?" said he. "No wonder he looked ill-pleased at my taking you away. You worship him, apparently; he is the fetish of these parts?"

"Not especially so, but he is very good to us, and to me in particular. I like the Hall," I added reflectively. "It is large and the rooms echo, it always looks calm, and the better for being

free of people. Sir Burleigh is just enough—it might look unnatural without any life."

"I am afraid not, to you, Helen Rohan; it seems that to 'live in a nook merely monastic' would suit your calm cynicism admirably. Is it not strange?—but yesterday we were strangers, thousands of leagues separating us, morally, almost every probability that we should each remain unknown to the other; and now to be standing here on the brink of this gloomy lake, never more to be satisfied unless we are together."

"Very strange!" said I drily, answering designedly only the letter of his speech.

"Ah, well, Helen! you know what I meant, though it was a bit too metaphorical: I shall never more be satisfied without you."

I looked across the lake, and thought I must be dreaming all this—that it was an illusion bred of the chaos in which the afternoon had passed; that it was an effort of nature to remove, by a dream, the pained reality of Alexis's perversion; a silly, soft reverie, conjuring up utter impossibilities. Long level rays of the westering sun came in bars, as though resting on rather than illumining the dark impassive water. An intense silence fell, as when, in a dream, one listens to a far-off sound. The still

silentness of the spring-day seemed to assure me of the completeness of my dream. From it—call it reverie or what you will—I was roused by the Jacobite taking my hand, which he raised to his lips. I shivered at the touch, as at an awakening, and raised my eyes wonderingly to his. These were no dream-eyes—a very plain and palpable earthly fire burned in them, such as used to light up the brown Highland eyes of Alexis. "Is beauty," thought I, ashamed, "but a torch to light up such looks in men's eyes—to equalise the best and the worst—Blount, the satyr, and this Jacobite Hyperion?" I coldly withdrew my hand and proposed walking on, to which he assented with a slight blush and a look of apology and contrition, as if rebuked by my gaze. During our absence, Sir Burleigh, mindful of his promise, had been laboriously writing a letter to Colonel Blount, *re* Alexis, which he gave me to read, drawing me aside as he said: "If you can think of anything to add, you may put it in, but I think it will do." It was as follows:—

"Dear Sir,

"My steward's nephew has enlisted in your troop, name McCausland. He is a respectable lad. If, as his Colonel, you would free him from the woman who claims to be his wife—but

who doubtless has other husbands — you would confer a great obligation on me, as I take a personal interest in him. I enclose a bank-bill for ten guineas, which please use on his account. Let this letter be strictly between ourselves.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours to command,

"BURLEIGH CLIFFORD.

"Burleigh Manor."

This, copied fair, was the substance which he bade me give to M'Causland to send off to Letchford at once. "And," said he reproachfully, for the Jacobite had left the room, "Casimir's Colonel, if he had one, would want a warning about you Helen. Why did you not obey me? If you knew the consequence, you would. He was little less than mad to be abroad." I sighed, being hungry, tired, and dispirited, and, relenting in his censure, he said it was Casimir's fault. As it was, suffering me to sit idle a-while and rest, while he stood by the fire, deep in thought, we both listened to the echoing footfall of the Jacobite (I dared not even think of him as the Prince) pacing up and down the hall outside, restlessly. Presently, finding he did not retreat, Sir Burleigh accompanied me to the door, dismissing

me with orders to hasten home, as 'twas getting dusk.

Casimir stopped on his restless walk, and bowed an adieu. In the dusk I thought a heavy and hunted look rested on his face, but it may only have been the shadows cast by the banners overhead. I went away, slowly haunted by an oppressive fear for him, for the first time in my life leaving behind me, at the Hall, anxious and foreboding thoughts, which eclipsed and subdued my grief for Alexis, even banishing in some measure the memory of it. The disclosure to me of his rank scarce influenced me, unless to more fear for him. Verney was away at Letchford, 'twas true, and there were chambers enough at the Hall never visited by him, where twenty men might be concealed; yet, his suspicions aroused, he would search till not a crevice was unexplored—and that he had suspicions, however wide of the true mark, was evident by his charging me with complicity. While writing for my master, the whole situation was involved and perilous—a feeling like that of a coming storm hovered over it; from some expressions in the letters I had copied, I gathered that the object of the Prince's visit was to obtain money from Sir Burleigh, who was very wealthy and not illiberal, living, by

choice, his lonely secluded life, having doubtless enjoyed in his youth the distractions and dissipations usual with men of rank—perhaps tiring of them, as Timon of his friends and flatterers.

The Hall, with its two occupants, followed and haunted me, their perplexities seemed mine. I strove to turn my thoughts loyally to our own affairs—to think of and for Sandy, to hope that the mediation of M'Causland and Sir Burleigh's letter would set him free; but, after a shudder, of remembrance of the woman, she vanished, and again reappeared the Jacobite, melancholy and restless, and his anxious troubled host, planning for him two unbanishable figures.

The whole of the danger was not then present to me—youth has its ostrich faculty of hiding its head and fancying none can then see it. The various plans that crossed my mind presupposed that others, equally interested to thwart them, would not see them.

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it will follow, as the day the night,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Often as I had read these words of Polonius they did not incorporate themselves in my few maxims of self-government. I felt rather a call to be true to others and leave myself out, forgetting that, with the self-crowned and garlanded

Ophelia, "the envious sliver broke," and that all my schemes must have a stronger and surer foundation than my conviction of their ease and feasibility, in the acquiescence and co-operation of those concerned in them. Of intelligence I had no lack, but of experience very little, or instead of vague uneasiness I should have felt acute alarm and fear. Sir Burleigh's letter was in my pocket, sealed with the Clifford crest. Feeling it unsafe there, as the wax might break, I took it out and read over the address, thinking with some disgust of Blount, who could, as a commander of men, sanction their destruction. Both Sir Burleigh and M'Causland agreed that he was not above indirect bribery. For the first time I wished I had something of value to cast to this moral hog that would induce him to protect the helpless Alexis, helpless by reason of his pure and Puritanical training, by his temporary insanity of wrath against us. The ten guineas enclosed, and the hope of more, might induce him to protect Sandy for the time, and, after, he would recover from this delirium of wrongs and jealousy, and his natural shrewdness would be shield enough. It was only now, now—as in the crisis and delirium of a fever—he must be taken care of, poor Sandy! poor fellow! I was not indifferent, as he pictured me,

to his feelings, to his sufferings. If only I could induce him to believe me, I would write to him at length; he was reflective, and would think it over perhaps, believe me, and be comforted. I again put away Sir Burleigh's letter. We were so inextricably mixed and mingled with the Cliffords that, in spite of our differential rank and often infirmities of temper, we seemed like one family of near kinship. Witness the disturbance made amongst us by Alexis' defection.

If Sir Burleigh had expressed a civil regret, and left us alone, it would have been as a moral earthquake dividing us for ever by a great gulf. So, when I knew his pleasure or interest lay in concealing his guest, it would have been unnatural to me to thwart him, even though I myself suffered. For assuredly that man had an attraction for me that none other held. So I mused as, warmly wrapped round in a plaid, the sunshine, its last rays gleaming on to the drift dead leaves of the high banks, I slowly went homeward. The stillness seemed to invite one to a soothing rest, and obeying an impulse of fatigue, I sat down amongst the twisted roots of a rowan-tree, from whose buds the emerald leaves barely showed their first folds. To reach the roots, which were high on the bank, a circuit round a struggling

furze-bush was imperative, and the top of the furze served as a screen from chance passengers.

It was a little-frequented bridle-road, used chiefly by the farm-servants and the Cliffords; and, as the evening closed in, many of our men slouched past from their several employments—not seeing me in my hedgerow-seat; but the Cliffords had long since done their part on the estate, and were at the Hall, drinking deep, and scheming, each in their several ways—Sir Burleigh for his friends the Jacobites; Verney for himself, for he had doubtless returned from Letchford for dinner. No steps broke the silence of the grey twilight; the gold-mist clouds of sunset were fading to dull, low-hanging vapours, through which one star beamed with a pale tremulous lustre—when the last presence to be expected in the solitary, silent bridle-path appeared. Colonel Tyrone Blount—not as usual superbly mountedon a weight-carrying charger, but afoot and alone, looking to the right and left slowly and cautiously, proceeding as though he feared an enemy, his face wearing an expression of the deepest anxiety, in strong contrast to its usual reckless-trooper look. To him came Verney Clifford, cantering furiously along on Sir Burleigh's cob, which he drew up so sharply at sight of Blount as to back it into the furze-bush

where, with whip and spur, he forced it remain, as though an act of cruelty gave him courage to say what he had come to say. I drew the plaid over my head, to conceal myself from them.

"We must not be seen together," were his first words after saluting Blount hastily, "and, by ——! we could not have chosen a better place. No cover for an enemy."

"You are quite prepared, Blount, eh? You will take the risk, and keep us out of it?"

"What else am I here for?" quoth Blount with a hoarse laugh. "A King's officer against the Pretender!"

"Then it's all right?" said Verney. "We might be plotters, were there anything to plot; but all your work will be to ride to the Hall, posting your men well out o' sight. C. S. has plenty of belief in his power of converting the King's officers. He will come out—and there you are. Hale him away to Letchford."

"I must be with them, or it will fall on me; though I avow my dissatisfaction, there is no question of my honour."

"But, then, Sir Burleigh don't gamble, and it's about time he gave up the Hall, as he's bent on treason."

"Down, you d——d brute!"—to the cob—one might think a witch was in the hedge."

"D'ye think we're doing the country a service —eh, Blount?"

"I tell you what," said Blount, "if the fellow's death follow, 'twill almost persuade me to give over dicing, old Verney!"

"All right," said "old" Verney, spurring the cob. "If one human sacrifice change the spots of a leopard, the sooner he is offered the better! Good-night, Tyrone!"

"Good-night t'ye, Verney. Here! I say!" —as he was riding off—"Where's Helen Rohan?"

"Much where she was," responded Verney, "for all I know to the contrary. The artful b——h! Perhaps you have later news?" Leaving Blount chuckling over the rejoinder, he galloped back to the Hall; whilst Blount, as in fear of detection, strode off in the direction of Letchford.

So quickly had they met, parted, and sped each their separate way, that the star, rising slowly and steadily over its vaporous shroud, seemed to reprove my belief that they had been there at all, to imply by its now-tranquil lustre that it had not risen pale and tremulous. I tried to become calm and steady too—to gaze out at the dark dirty plot I had overheard, as the star looked over the dim vapours from which the

golden hues had gone. But the dim dirty vapour of this plot had its gold lining to come. Fifteen thousands pounds to each—to Blount the honour of the capture, to Verney Clifford the villainy of the surrender; but to Charles Stuart the danger of the coarse Guelph vengeance.

"Charles Stuart is nothing to me!" I muse, "and, if the interests of a kingdom demand the extinction of a life, be it good or bad, it must be sacrificed." But the strong fountain of natural justice bubbled up in, and overflowed my heart, and I thought, "The devil brings many special pleas to bias our minds, but in our heart is a judge set there by God, and against whose ruling is danger. It is the strong judge instinct. I will try to save him. May God help me!"

I rose up, cramped and stiff, and, to revive my belief in the world and its ways, bared my arms and went through the furze-bush, getting not a little scratched. This was to me what an essence would be to a fine city-dame, bracing my nerves. Having resolved to do my best to save Sir Burleigh's pale-faced guest from his friends, it did not occur to me as likely to conduce to my own comfort if I went about it in a headlong fashion, as no doubt I ought to

have done, considering my age and sex, and the peculiar and romantic interest attaching to my *protégé*. But, if I felt a slight contempt for him when considering him only an adherent to a feeble cause, disabling himself by rheumatism in a wet park, my respect was not at all strengthened by his purposeless way of putting himself into the power of Verney Clifford and Blount. Indeed, so far my reason went with them, and, granting that I had been a gambler in needy case, I should most likely have proposed in a sepulchral voice, from my thorny cover, to make it a tripart scheme, to reward me for so advantageously posting myself. And there could be no doubt I should have brought arguments sufficiently convincing to induce my two dear friends, Blount and Clifford, to consent, and been myself the richer by ten thousand pounds.

It would have been a nice little sum, wherewith, had I been content, I might have induced some worthy thane of equal wealth to club together, and been happy Guelphites to the end of our country-lives—a lazar in a rich mantle; but, unluckily, I was not "mad on marriage" and its consequent blessings, and, carefully assorting all other temptations purchasable by ten thousand pounds, my mind framed, as they rose, hypercritical objections to each and all.

For me, as for the star, the gold was out of the vapour, and I rose above it as slow, as steady, and as immutable. It had been bad for both sides—the Plotters and the Pretender—to see how justly and impartially I weighed their merits, neither letting a prejudice against treachery, nor a contempt for mental weakness, incline the scale. How I set out in fancy—the jewels, the land, the well-biggit manor-house that might be mine, as against the weak, wavering gratitude of a rheumatic, romantic, pale-faced man who ran about the country claiming a crown, and put the weak head it should adorn into every noose of cobweb-circumstance, seeming to forget the inexorable physiological fact that, to the wearing of a crown, a head is a strict necessity.

On my arrival at home, M'Causland, electing for the evening performance of his devotions—in which, through my ears, I was perforce always a sharer—to read the edifying accounts of that worthy Bible-heroine Jaël, decided me.

I, Helen Rohan, be like that low-bred Jewess, that vulgar, canting, poisonous, mindless, soulless animal, elected by a community, now happily outcast, as a type of heroism, for killing a sleeping man? I? My mouth took a cold, bitter, downward curve as M'Causland, his reading over,

wiped his spectacles and drew moral deductions from the history, which I stopped in mid-career by asking him to sing a psalm. Better Scotch discord than Bible-heroism of that type. I calculated that, that over, I could leave unremarked, and by speed make my way to the Hall in time to warn Sir Burleigh of his friend's danger. M'Causland invited me to join in his religious rite, but I concluded that whoever was addressed by it would prefer a solo, and went on knitting, tranquilly silent. There was a sect called, I believe, by the euphemistic title of "Muggletonian's," whose creed is commendable for three things—simplicity, austerity, sublimity; and is at once soothing, flattering, and easy. It is to believe—not a hard faith for most religiously-inclined, and therefore compulsorily charitable, folk—that everyone who is not a Muggletonian is a devil, and, so far as imperfect human laws allow, to fully act up to that faith; also, that it is acceptable to the "powers that be" to sing hymns to jig-tunes. Floating legends of Muggletonians occupied my mind during M'Causland's singing—though, worthy man, he did his very best by a nasal twang and many Scotch fa'a's to break the secular backbone of the melody. To do him justice, though, he had never heard of Muggletonians; he was, in momentary religious

enthusiasm, not inapt to dig as deep, as wide, and as black a gulf between himself and the unregenerate, as they were. Accordingly, having soared aloft, he came back with a thump on to me.

"Eh, Helen Rohan! it's sad to see young lips sae cauld an' curned, as yours the day, when ye aye ken it's psalms ye should be singin' an' spiritual songs."

"It requires a peculiar voice," I replied, mildly, knitting rapidly and weaving the sarcasm into the wool, which perhaps blunted it, "to sing as you sing. Is not there another verse? Pray sing it, uncle."

Having had no opportunity of trying the effect of flattery on a Muggletonian, I cannot say whether even a "devil" might not chance to increase its misery through its ears. It is very certain that I had. And I was not sorry to hear an outcry from the several curs in the farmyard announcing a strange presence.

M'Causland, shouting an "Amen" in the middle of a verse, got up and went to see the cause of the disturbance. He had scarcely closed the door after him when a loud rap came to the unshuttered window, and, on my opening it, the pale face of the Jacobite was thrust in, beaded with sweat as though from hard running.

A doubt seized me for the first time whether all were not mistaken in supposing this man to be the Pretender himself, since he acted in a manner the most calculated to injure his own interests in every way, even when any instant might lease him to an enemy, to be transferred as freehold to the Guelph. His first words dispelled this doubt.

"I am pursued," he said, with a calm desperation that would have been heroic if he had had any smallest justification for being pursued. "Can I trust you, Helen Rohan? You know who I am. And the dragoons are out, searching the Hall."

"Come in," I suggested, "through the window. "So,"—as he sprang lightly in, closed, it and arranged the blind. "What is it you propose, concealment or escape?"

"Escape is hopeless," he said, dusting a small piece of earth, left by his boot, from the white window-seat, "and concealment desperate. Counsel me! Can I shelter here?"

"Here is a chance of Fame," I mutter, "a hammer and rusty nail, a little closing of the eyes to treachery." Then to him I said: "Since treachery may be two-edged, is your need urgent? Give me your word that it is danger brings you here."

"On my word, on my honour, the dragoons from Letchford are out." And I knew it was true.

For a minute, the psalms M'Causland had been singing howled in my ears. Jaël might have been hammering my head, and all the world crying "Amen" to the performance:—a swift sudden dizziness seized me, all the reasons I had marshalled for and against him clamoured to be heard. I had, it now seemed to me, no *power* to help him. There was not a closet, but of which Elsie kept the keys. The very flint and steel were locked away, in her rigid Scotch economy. The only room was my own chamber. And we—we had lost that one chance by waiting. A clatter of steps outside in the brick-passage, and he had barely time to crouch down under the stiff tapestry cover of the table, at my feet, before, flinging the door wide, Verney Clifford, M'Causland, Blount, and two dragoons entered.

Providentially, the mastiff Beech was with his master, and, by sullenly coming as was his wont to me for praises and caresses, he, though at first evincing some uneasiness at the Jacobite's concealed presence, knew him as a friend, and, on being coaxed to quietness, made a guard to both, the sullen ferocity of whose aspect kept

Blount and the soldiers away from a too close approach to us.

"We are a noisy lot—eh, Helen Rohan?" said Blount, striding up at length and shaking hands perforce, a little flushed with drink. "But the hunt is up, my dear, and our blood is up too—we mean to have him—eh, boy?"

He appealed to Beech, who growled at his advances threateningly.

"Where is he? And who is he?" I asked, knitting tranquilly. Is it a deserter sir?"

Verney Clifford, who had been regarding me critically, at this juncture came close, turning me to ice—to fire—to anything that is uncomfortable and most wretched—and said:

"The Jacobite fellow, supposed to be Charles Stuart himself. We have tracked him so far, and M'Causland tells us the dogs gave the alarm in the farmyard just now. We are going to take a glass of whiskey to give the fellow time to steal off, and then—view holloa, eh Blount? So long as we are here he will be finding a snug hiding-place in the barns. So we'll rest and refresh, and then after him again."

"You take it in good part, Helen—he is not your hero, that's certain."

"No, I am her hero," said Blount, sniggering and facetious.

"How do you know I'm not knitting him a pair of stockings?" I said, proffering the coloured web of work for Blount's inspection, and contriving by a pressure of his hand to convey the meaning that they were for himself.

The Colonel was delighted, and winked so strenuously to convey a secret understanding, that Beech, regarding it as a grimace directed to himself, was fain to fly upon him, to avenge his *amour propre*. At this juncture, M'Causland and the whiskey beloved of Verney's soul appeared together, and, after drinking it freely, Blount came back, like a half-inebriate Judas, and kissed my lips, muttering confidentially (aside): "Pon my soul, I've only waited for this windfall to make you an offer, Helen Rohan, worth your having, my dear. I think (hiccup) we should suit each other, eh? We always somehow pull along friendly and smooth."

"What's that d——d mastiff doing with his head in your lap? You shall have a lap-dog in barracks—ha, ha!—you shall have *me*!"

"Come on!" commanded Lord Clifford, with considerable acrimony of tone and manner, having witnessed, with no small displeasure, his partner's audacity so well rewarded; and Blount, with a roguish twinkle in his bloodshot eyes, winked, and whispered: "He's no woman's

fancy-man—Clifford isn't good-natured enough eh?—not jovial enough! I think I know which you like the best, eh?" — withdrawing in his usual sidelong fashion, in order to look and leer to the very last.

The door had scarce closed on this rabble, when an equally indocile crew rushed in, consisting of Elsie and Elizabeth, who declared, with one accord, that they were not going to be ravished by dissolute soldiery—which, taking into account Elsie's sixty years and Elizabeth's rugged country-face, did not seem an imminent risk.

"What do you mean?" I said, severely. "The soldiers are out on duty." Despite a desire to laugh, I felt my cheeks burn at the absurdity of these two fools, thinking of the hidden listener.

"Pass me the Bible," I said to Elizabeth. "I will calm your minds with Scripture-reading and exposition."

No other words occurred to me just then; and these, the open Bible suggested. To be supposed to possess a mind, was flattering. Elizabeth, unwilling to dispel so pleasing a delusion, evinced signs of uneasiness. She might be asked questions about Noah, or Seth, or Enoch, and objected to impart her misleading bio-

graphies of those people in public—Elsie being as theological as a bishop—so she made humble request to go, first, and bolt the doors, to keep out the soldiers.

"Bolts!" muttered Elsie, rising, with her knitting shaking in her palsied hand. "It's no Helen Rohan wha's to trust to see to bolts. I'll e'en gae mysel' an' bolt out the licentious soldiers—the curse o' the countraside!"

Like two witches over whom holywater had been flung, they disappeared to their own quarters, and soon creaked up the kitchen-stairs to bed, locking the stair-doorway.

"I think we may fairly claim our turn now." I arose and bolted the door. "Elsie will fumble for an hour before she lets anyone in—on purpose."

The Jacobite arose cramped and pallid; signs of strong agitation were on his face as he followed me to the fire, stretching out and warming his long pale hands helplessly, and looking as miserable as the Guelph himself could desire his rival to look. I felt very strongly for him, now.

"Have some whiskey." I poured some of the green-tinged gurgling fluid into a glass, and, putting my lips to it to assure him of its goodness, passed it over.

"You are a curiosity," he averred, retaining my hand while he drank. "A small calm iceberg. How many wrecks?"

On my answering "None," he raised his eyebrows, but, being in my power, forbore to contradict, saying, as he set the glass on the table:

"What are you going to do with me? I only stipulate not to pass the night with that beastly mastiff close to me. By George!—not George Guelph, though!—if that brute hadn't forestalled me, I might have rested my head in your lap."

His lank uncurled hair, and most depressed pale face, might have reassured even Elsie, though he had been in uniform fifty times.

It was evident his thoughts were far from me, and Blount's freedom being unrepelled, even though he himself was the cause, biassed him to an erroneous dim belief in my liking for such commonplace gallantry—that it was his only resource at once to thank me for the past, and conciliate for the future. This was no time, however, to be nice and wise. I looked away to keep my severe disapproval from him; then, with a reminder of the immediate peril in which he stood, said, with a most silly blush which came in spite of myself—said, with that elabora-

tion of circumstance by which embarrassment always prolongs itself:

"We have neither garret nor granery where you would be safe for five minutes. Therefore—"

"Therefore," said he, endeavouring to lighten my awkwardness, "I must go—my blood upon my own head!"

At this I grew hopeless—words would not come. To tell a man in peril of his life that you mean to turn him out to the avengers of blood, were easy—wanting only a certain callousness to suffering in others, or conviction of its being his due; but to say to a comparative stranger, however strongly moved to commiserate him, or shield him, "There is but one room, and that I must share!" At length contriving, though in what words I know not, to convey the idea of this refuge to him, he received it absently as of no moment, as people generally receive the sacrifices of others, perhaps not thinking of its aspect to me; he continued warming his hands thoughtfully at the fire as if he had not heard. Then he asked, abruptly, how long I had known Colonel Blount. "About three weeks or a month, eh? There seems to be a good understanding between you?"

"That," said I, recovering, "is but seeming.

Had I risen to repel his impertinences to-night, I think it likely you would not now be here to reflect on me for them."

"I liked them none the more," he said angrily, as though possessing a right to resent them. "Why did he kiss you?"

"Sir," I said coldly, "beyond my having saved you (as Sir Burleigh's friend) from your pursuers, I know no warrant you have for censuring me, let me act as I may."

"Think," said he, "that letter, true as that speech is, there is a spirit of gratitude and feeling in me towards you, not to be explained by trivialities of time. Had it been a hundred years since you saved me, I could not feel more warmly your goodness to a fugitive." Indeed, Helen Rohan, since first seeing you at the lake-side you have haunted me.

"Literally?" I asked smiling.

"No," said he, "you know what I mean—like a vision of youth and love."

"That is very pretty," I thought indifferently. "Just a town-bred man's way of compliment, but not to the present purpose."

The hour was late—no time could be safely lost in this idle hair-splitting as to whether I was or was not justified in gratifying Blount, nor in receiving compliment.

"You seem fond of metaphysic subtleties," I said, "but if I remind you that those may any moment enter who take everything and everybody literally, you may be inclined to defer them for the present."

"What am I, then, to do?" he asked. "You forget I am a stranger here."

"We always forget our guests are strangers, sir."

"A very pretty speech, Helen Rohan."

"And true," I said, laughing, "or true enough —for truth should be comparative,or may mislead one."

"Lead on, then," said he. "Put me wherever your judgment suggests; for, whatever else may be wanting in you, it is not ability." To this unnecessary information I made no rejoinder. Here was a man in danger of his life, bandying words and measuring wits. I, with a present fear of Blount's return, led on upstairs to the refuge I had offered him, rather amused at the strangeness of the whole proceeding, and its suddenness. But an hour before, sitting in the farm-parlour, had Asmodeus, the demon who unroofed houses and showed him he guided strange sights, lifted the roof from my chamber at the extreme end of the long corridor, there would have shown only a large and, I may say,

exceptionally well-kept and trim-furnished room for a farm. For, on my account, M'Causland had obtained from the Hall such things as were then rare even in the houses of the lesser squires. Item, two fringed Persian rugs; item, a large steel mirror with a carved border, an oak table with drawers in it, and some Dresden china as ewer and bath, together with a set of tapestry bed-hangings. Of all this, which Sir Burleigh contemptuously characterised as only fit for a girl or a fool, I was not a little proud, and forced Elizabeth, by persistent pressure, to polish the floor up to a level with the oak-polished floors of the Hall state-rooms, spreading my mats, with their fringes flattened out on its smooth surface, like masses of waving-one-way weeds in clear water. It was a very stately-looking room, therefore, in which, after lighting the candles, the Jacobite found himself; and though, I hope, above looking at him to perceive astonishment, I could not forbear seeing in the mirror that he was in some degree surprised—that he looked from me to the surroundings, and then again at me. For, to reach this west room, was a lobby dark at noonday, with steps up and steps down, where unused trunks and kists of household stuff were deposited, and the approach warranted only the belief that some obscure dim

garret lay beyond, mouldy and wretched, or but "dwelling in decencies."

"This, then," said I with a blush at once of delight at having an appreciative onlooker of my grandeur, and at the thought that it was a maiden's chamber. "This is at your service, and, though I may have to enter, you will be forearmed by hearing me approach up the steps from the lobby; and the door," I added, "has a key—see! it turns easily."

"So, then," said he carelessly, "I can turn the key on you!"

"Or on Blount!" I answered, "or Verney Clifford!"

"You are the most present danger, Helen Rohan."

"Well turn the key," I said impatiently, "though no one save myself ever comes in—or came—except Sir Burleigh." This I said of *malice prepense*, and was well rewarded by his gasp of astonishment.

"Except," said he, "Sir Burleigh Clifford?'

"Yes," I replied, indignant at his inquisitorial tone. "Why are you surprised? He is often here, and gave M'Causland this furniture from the Hall for me. The state-rooms there have rugs just similar to these, but no one there ever spreads out the fringe so carefully unless I

do, once in a way, for diversion. They keep but one woman-servant, and she is a widow; her son is a soldier in Ireland, he is or was a scapegrace sailor and now is turned a scapegrace soldier. This woman, Janet, cares for little but cooking. Craig, Sir Burleigh's valet, sweeps the state-rooms and picture-gallery, and sometimes polishes the floors, but not very often. Mine is better polished than they."

Then, as he did not answer, I looked up from a fond contemplation of the shining oak-floor. Seeing with astonishment that he looked very pale and troubled.

"What is it?" I asked, troubled too, thinking he heard something foreboding danger which I had been too busy talking to note myself.

"I must go," said he, his lips twitching angrily.

"Why?" I asked, distressed at his folly.

"If Sir Burleigh—" said he, then broke down with a great sigh, as though the danger he had escaped only just begun to be realised.

"Sir Burleigh must not know you are here," I cried. "Verney Clifford would win it out of him. Of what were you thinking?" I continued more timidly, as his eyes dwelt sternly on my face, which blushed and paled before that strange fixed gaze.

"I was thinking," said he, "that the suzerainty of an estate like this is no contemptible heritage, also of certain sovereign-rights which my old friend Sir Burleigh seems by no means to hold in abeyance."

"That of visiting his vassals," I laughed, "being one. He comes very often, yet has only been in this room once, to see the plenishing fixed. Then he cursed the steps down and the steps up, and swore he would never come again, and called me a proud, conceited pye to hurry him out of the parlour to see things he could any day see at the Hall. M'Causland was angry too, for they were in the midst of a dispute about sheep, and I made both leave it to see my room."

"Thank God!" said the Jacobite, earnestly, "I thought it could not be—"

"Did you hear anything?" I asked, anxiously.

"Yes," said he, "a thunderclap."

I went to the window and looked out; the sky was covered now with inky clouds, but they were not slow thunderclouds. So I concluded he had been mistaken.

"Good-night!" said I, extending my hand. For a moment he looked searchingly into my face—into mine eyes, as though his keen gaze would dive to the most hidden thoughts of my

heart. Then, bending his knee, he kissed my hand respectfully.

"I have," said he, retaining it as he rose, "to-night had two infinite perils averted:—that my life, risked by my own perversity, should escape by a miracle, is cause of thankfulness.

"What was the other?" I asked, as he paused.

"The other," he continued, "was a sharper pain, almost, than I could have borne—an iron that would have corroded my very soul—the peril of present agony, and loss of all future trust in humankind."

This I pondered, going over mentally the events of the evening. In whom had he trusted, feared betrayal, and again believed in? 'Twas a problem I could not solve; so, again wishing him good-night, I retired. From my comfortless and cold rest on two large boxes drawn together, with a pillow and blanket withdrawn from Sandy's bed, I dared not rise too early, as early hours, save for a freak, were unusual with me, and the cold, and confusion of redding up, performed with the unnecessary noise and jarring of moveables which pleased Elizabeth and satisfied Elsie, were peculiarly disagreeable, as were also their loud harsh voices, calling to each other, to and from the kitchen. So, as a rule, I waited upstairs, leaning from my window to hear

the morning song of the lark, or arranging my few gowns neatly in the wardrobe, or reading some Bible narrative—anything till the call to breakfast, from the end of the corridor leading to my room, assured me that in our domain the daily cleansing was done, and quiet reigning. Elizabeth and Elsie, too, were not happy in any surveillance—resenting it, except from M'Causland. In this dark and dismal box-cumbered lobby, the time seemed endless. I felt like a prisoner in a dungeon, and, unused to physical privation or mental gloom, tears began, almost without my consciousness, to fall into my clasped hands. I only knew that it was morning by a ray of dusky light coming from under the door that led outward. What the hour was, I could not tell, for the farm-servants rose at four, working oftentimes by candlelight.

"They are happy," I thought, bitterly, "free and in the light." Baron Trenck could not, moment for moment, have been worse affected to his prison than I to this. My bones ached—used to the soft feathers of the large bed; yet it was not the mere physical privation only—that I could endure as well as another; I think it must have been more a sense of indignity, the feeling of an outcast in outer darkness, a dismal definition which occurred forcibly to my mind. "Only

a few hours," I mused, "yet what a change is here!" And I—who dare sometimes dream of stoicism!—I had fortunately left tears, and sat with patient resignation, when my room-door was unlocked, opened, and the Jacobite appeared. He stood for a moment on the threshold, the darkness confusing him; then cautiously groped his way down the three steps, apparently seeing me seated there, or a dim-outlined figure he guessed to be mine.

"Is that Helen Rohan?" he asked at length, as, distrusting as yet my voice, I was silent.

"Yes," said I, laughing at his uncertainty; whilst my eyes, now used to the shadows, saw him clearly.

"Pray come into the light," he whispered, "or I shall emulate Sir Burleigh—'curse the steps up and curse the steps down.' That amiable commination afforded me inexpressible pleasure: I thought of it waking and sleeping, Helen Rohan."

"Why of that?" I asked, gladly entering again into light and space, yet surprised at that special mention of Sir Burleigh being so pleasant to him.

"It was a lever, Helen, lifting a thousand

weights from me. Ask me no more, or, as sweet Carew sings:—

> 'Ask me no more whither do stray
> The golden atoms of the day,
> For in pure love Heaven did prepare
> Those powders to enrich your hair.'

Yet again—

> 'Ask me no more if East or West
> The Phœnix builds her spicy nest—'

For here," said he, "it is, and here the rare and beautiful Phœnix—"

"Sir Burleigh built it," I objected, "and Thomas Carew did not mean his courtly verse-making for a mere country-girl. You will raise his ghost by so misapplying his pretty poem."

"I have," said he, drawing me to the window with a face of concern, "at least raised one ghost. You are pale, you have been shedding tears."

"It is nothing," I said blushing, "but the Sybarite's ruffled rose-leaf. It was the dark," I confessed at length, as no less would satisfy him.

"In the lobby?" he inquired, and, on being answered "Yes," turned away in anger.

"I am a fool," I said with humility. "To-night I shall not notice either cold or darkness." With that he grew yet angrier. "Well!" said I petulantly, "in what great matter have I offended you? If I am sorry——"

"Helen," said he gravely, "I am a soldier, and held to be a gentleman. You have treated me like a country-churl or a savage."

"It was necessary," said I, "for your safety, and be sure that a country-churl or a savage would win no such sufferance from me."

"Breakfast!" came the distant echo of M'Causland's voice, and warning him not to be seen at the window, I went downstairs. All was light and brightness in the parlour; the cheerful warmth of the wood-fire, revived me, bringing a little colour to my pale face.

"Trouble tells on ye, Helen," said my uncle. "Ye are dreaming o' the hunted Jacobite. To tell solid troth, I wad be willin' he were taken, for, so certain as the sun shines, Sir Burleigh will, if he go on in this style, lose the Manor, an' that, Verney Clifford kens, an', like a wise man (of this world), he joins in the hunt—ay, an' so would in the blood-money for a' his bran-new nobility of four descents. Why, Sir Burleigh is seventeenth baronet, and by clear right, if the Stuarts were in—which they will never be—a Baron, a belted Earl, like Will Douglas, of the ballad. I must now be on my way to the Hall. Go ye to your room an' rest, for if ye gang oot sae ghostlike, I must tell Sir Burleigh ye are heart-broke for his Jacobite fren'. In short," he said,

leaving jesting," 'tis as much as one man's wits can to manage between him and milord, an' I count on your help to keep straight wi' baith. Do not let Verney see ye downhearted, or he will conclude us Jacobites too—which Heaven forefend! The fellow got clean away last night." Then he rose and went off, slamming to the door behind him, the usual signal, for the servants, of the conclusion of breakfast in the parlour.

This morning, Elizabeth was in no haste to come, it being some domestic saturnalia—as washing or churning. So I carried a cup of hot coffee to the Jacobite, with a cold chicken and some bread, and, waiting whilst he ate, returned cup and fragments to their proper places on the table, only retaining a few scones of white flour.

"What a dear little fox you are!" he laughed, as I entered with this humble provision, putting it in the table-drawer. "You look as crafty over those cakes as if a life depended— Curse my life!" he went on irritably—it's mention bringing to his memory that on such chance aids, and feeble means of defence, his life in truth depended just now. "It is bitterer than death to reflect on my nigh hopeless condition, always in hiding."

"Do not be unhopeful," I said, sincerely pity-

ing him. "This is but a cloud, and will quickly pass."

"I hope so," said he, earnestly, "for conscience and honour are shooting clouds of poisoned arrows at my thoughts, and the contest is intolerable."

I wondered what he meant, suggesting that I would privately inform Sir Burleigh of his whereabouts and safety, if he thought good.

"Do not," said he, with intense eagerness. "I beg you will not so far break faith with me. I appeal to your honour, Helen. It must not be known that I am here."

"As you will," I said, surprised why he would not acquaint Sir Burleigh of his safety, who would be suffering great anxiety and be in harassing suspense; but this appeal was decisive, and my word pledged.

"You are a good girl," said he, gratefully! "Being a fugitive, I do not see where I could be better bestowed. Yet, if it peril your happiness, Helen ——"

"There is no present peril," I replied, relating my uncle's talk at breakfast. "And that reminds me that this window is an easy drop to the ground, and a return can be made by climbing the thatch at its lowest point. No one from the house or farmyard can see any enter or leave

that way, I have done so often enough at night —if I could not sleep, or wanted a walk in the moonlight, or for idleness. Can you climb, sir ?"

"To Olympus," said he, "with so bright a beacon as goal."

"Then," said I, "if you choose reading, there is the Bible. I must go now, for it is late."

"Don't go," said he. "Somehow I would rather talk to you, a little dusky pink angel, than read about *les autres*."

"Men always like pink," I laugh at this allusion to my pink gown. "Sir Burleigh calls it neat!"

"Sir Burleigh might find some better occupation than looking at you," he said severely.

"He generally does so, but surely he may look at his steward's niece?"

"Did he give you that pink gown, Helen Rohan?"

"No, M'Causland bought it for me, at the last mop and market, of a Scotch pedlar, and I made it myself, after the 'portrait of a lady' at the Hall. She is in pink too; but mine, if you stroke it down one way, is brown."

"Truly?" said he, in some amaze; yet, on stroking, he perceived I was right. "I wonder," said he, "if your bronze hair would turn pink,

stroked—or your pink cheeks, brown. The Persians, Helen, like pink hair; altogether, I too like pink, as well as the Persians or Sir Burleigh."

Through all this trifling talk I could perceive the lines of anxiety and care, the tension of the muscles round the mouth, and the haggard watchfulness of his eyes. "'Twould be cruel,' I thought, "to let him dwell too strongly on his miserable condition—a depressed mind will not so readily plan or think out successfully any scheme of action; so, having succeeded in amusing him for the time, I took my leave, followed by his wistful eyes as though his last friend was deserting him. It was a dull day, it rained heavily.

I had scarcely got downstairs when Elizabeth, coming in, told me Bill Stovel, the dull ploughboy Alexis had rescued from soldiering, wanted to see me. Bill was in the kitchen, looking anything but cheerful—wet as the midden that steamed outside. His errand was a message from Alexis. At this in itself I was not surprised, as Bill was Alexis's henchman and hanger-on, and had every regard for his tall tyrannical master; both being connoisseurs in vermin, such as stoats, weasels, ferrets, and the like. These, I knew for a fact—though Sandy had frequently denied it to M'Causland—

he kept in his garret-room, under the floor, which was one reason I would not sleep there. So, now that Bill produced a note from him, eagerly vouching for its anthenticity, I first believed on the first premises, then doubted on the second. "Why should Bill so unnecessarily take his Gospel-oath that Sandy writ every letter of it. "Of course, of course!" said I, re-examining it and detecting Lord Clifford's round *o*'s, and uncrossed *t*'s. "It is very like Sandy's writing, Bill."

"It is so!" said Bill, stolidly and cunningly. It ran:—

"Put away your treasure in my garret; there is a loose plank in the floor, and space enough even for a person, let alone a few silver-spoons."

"Then," said I, trembling, "I suppose the soldiers are coming again, Bill?"

"They are," said Bill, "flichtin' an' flutterin' everywhere, takin' no account of the rain teeming down."

"They are not over-honest," I remarked, "and they drink,"

"Yaas," said he, "they do so!—an' I might ha' ben a soldier." This vanishing-point of Bill's ambition was ever before him.

"Sandy tells me to hide the silver-spoons, Bill. You know his room. Will you put them

for me under the loose plank of the floor, where Alexis kept the badger?"

"There's ferrets there, yet," said Bill, with conviction, "an' it's rats they are livin' on—and mice. Spoils 'em for rabbitin'."

"Never heed them to-day," I exclaim. "You may come another time and take them away for your own. Now we must lose no time, for I will put away everything of value—my gowns and hoods, silver thimble, and two spade-guineas. You must get right in, Bill, I will wrap them up in a sheet. It is dry there, of course."

"I'll do it," said he. "Gi' me the whole lot —none will find where I put 'em."

It was now drawing towards evening, and raining in torrents. The road would be heavy—the sandy bridle-track leading to the farm, nearly impassable; thus the weather aided, in one way, in delaying the advance of the new search-party; yet that they were, like fate, hastening on, could not be doubted. What I could, that would I do —the rest remaining in higher hands. Motioning Bill Stovel to follow, I went upstairs. The Jacobite, hearing his heavy footfall, had concealed himself behind the heavy hangings of the bed. As I entered purposely leaving the door wide open, that Stovel might see into the room—I left him on the steps of the lobby, and took

from the garde-robe my best plum-coloured gown, my buckled slippers, and a few other articles; and, rolling them in a towel, delivered them to Bill to conceal in the garret. With these, he went off, stripping off his steaming and ragged long smock, which, with boyish carelessness, he flung a-heap into the passage. An inspiration came to me, I snatched it up, wetting my hands, and as the Jacobite emerged, on the doors closing, said hurriedly:

"They are returning on a new search. Hiding here is impossible. Slip this on—get out of window and make for the mawkin yonder in the field. It is not a long drop to the ground. I cannot tell what else to counsel; but think that, even if seen through the rain, you will be mistaken for a labourer, if you bend and slouch as they do. Stand close by the mawkin, be one with it. When the searchers are gone, I will come and tell you, even if it be midnight—till then do not return."

He listened, his eyes dilated with excitement and agitation, his face white, and was for madly refusing to fly, for rejecting the necessary ignominy of so foul a disguise as this wet clout presented.

"Why," said I, in despair and angry excitement at this niceness and unwisdom, "would

you have it a silk cassock? For God's sake! will you give away your life? I tell you they are near! It is all that can be done! It is not a long drop to the ground! The search here will be rigorous, for Lord Clifford is in it!"

By this, he was, in infinite disgust, slowly fitting on the long smock, and, pointing out from the window the direction he should take, I opened it. A fresh storm of rain, a sudden darkening of the window—he was gone. I saw the doleful figure slouch off, and myself—knowing who it was—thought how well he counterfeited the gait and hobble of a farm-hind. No time must be lost by me, however. So, closing the window and drying the rain-drops from the ledge, I straightened the room carefully, feeling sure it would be searched, and followed Stovel to Alexis's garret. Bill was there, pondering—his oblique light eyes turned to the ceiling; he spat on his hands, wet enough already, and rubbed them together, intimating work.

"Bill," I said, "I've thrown away your old jacket, it was too wet to be on our floors, but I'll give you one of Sandy's field-coats. It is short, and will about fit you."

"Thankee!" said Bill, grateful for the gift of

a whole unragged garment, nor resenting my disposing of the other.

Soon he had enough to occupy him, squeezing into the aperture, and crawling far in under the floor, uttering short biographical notices of the various vermin which Sandy had kept there—stoats, weasels, and badgers.

"It was lucky you thought to tell them of this place!" I hazarded, resolved, while Bill's mental faculties were obfuscated by dust and tender memories of stoats and squirrels, to get what light I could from his luminous mind on the subject of the forged note.

"Yaas," he said indistinctly, "Milord Clifford's main cur'ous; it was he asked me, was there ne'er a hidin'-place at the farm. I told him Sandy M'Causland kept a power o' varmints here. 'An',' says he, 'could e'er a man crip in?' So I said, 'A thin fellow mought, for I'd a bin, as I have, an' many's the time I've bin bit an' tore fetchin' Sandy out his ferrets. For he would gie me a clout, a would, if I'd say 'No' to 'im, being he was too big to get in himself."

Quite unconscious, in his preoccupation, that he had betrayed his amiable employer, Verney, Bill rambled on—the teeming rain meanwhile coming down in rivers outside, meeting as it fell with the evening mists rising from the

ground. It was growing darker too, and was quite dark when Bill, promising his services at any time to regain the hidden bundle and rejoicing in his new coat, departed.

I retired downstairs, tremulously awaiting the next move in this new search; the fire burn brightly, and the candles were lit earlier than usual; supper was on the table, when Clifford M'Causland and Blount rode up, all wet through.

"Looks cheerful here!" said Verney, himself cheerfuller than the fire.

"It does so!" said Blount, saluting me by touching his foraging-cap.

"Eh! but I'm damp!" said M'Causland, putting the case mildly and with caution. If a Clifford was wet, he must be damp only. They stood for a moment in a silence which I knew meant embarrassment; then the first move, which meant checkmate, but not to me, was taken by Verney.

"I'll go, with your leave, M'Causland and put off these wet things. Can you lend me some while they are dried?"

"Ay, to baith o' ye," said M'Causland, who had evidently not been led to suspect me, but only a possible intruder, and had learnt his lesson imperfectly and stiffly. Taking one of

the candles, he conducted them from the room. I followed to the stair's-foot, and said to him (aside):

"Don't go to Sandy's room, uncle."

"Why not?" he said sternly. "What is the empty nest t'ye, Helen Rohan?"

Blount and Verney stood a stair above us—in their eagerness they had passed their host, and Blount's hand was on his sword.

"Poor life in peril, poor drenched mawkin standing still and silent in the field—how gladly would your sword have been drawn on this man!" thought I. I said no more, but, with a sigh which Verney misinterpreted, as 'twas meant he should, suffered them to pass.

"Is this Helen Rohan's room?" said Verney, stopping at the half-open door and pushing it wide. "We'll look in—eh, Blount?"

They entered and closed the door, and I knew that a rigorous search was made, but it was trim as a primrose, as every maiden's chamber should be. The heavy curtains of the bed were looped back, the lavendered lace-edged sheets were as snow, the little slippers in a row on the wide hearth, the ruffled camlet gowns stiffly hung in the garde-robe, the Bible and psalter on the heavy carved table, the oak-floor so smooth and slippery that Blount, venturing

off the Persian mats, slipped and swore and hurt his elbow, at which I, listening in the dark corridor near, smiled.

"No bad lodging for a *paysanne*!" sneered Verney.

"I wouldn't mind the girl, in barracks," growled the constant Colonel with a touching tenderness separating me from my surroundings as I suppose he had to do with most of his female acquaintance.

"I wouldn't mind her in hell!" said Verney, savagely—he too had slipped, and struck his knee. For she is a devil incarnate, and a man might offend a witch as safely.

"No one could live here," said Blount, "sagely. "It would freeze a man to death."

"Spit the bed!" said Verney with sudden suspicion.

"I'll have no sic outrage in my house," said M'Causland. "If it be your pleasure, pull it off bodily."

"The holes will be no great matter to mend," said Verney, coolly thrusting his rapier many times through the bed. Then, looking behind, under, and above it, up the chimney, out of the window, under the rugs, in the very Bible, they departed, convinced. I followed at a respectful distance and listened, round a near

black corner, to the search in the garret. Verney lifted the plank and called upon the spoons, gown, and silver thimble to come out. Then, catching sight of the bundle well away to one side, tried to induce Blount to go under and search.

"Send your dog," said Blount angrily, "I don't want my guts spitted with his rapier if he be there."

"I fear neither him nor his rapier," sneered Verney, and, taking his sword under his arm, he lowered himself down, ordering M'Causland to to light him. This he did to such ill purpose that milord fell and cut his hand on the sword-edge. I did not know till then that he was so well acquainted with Scripture, though I must allow he put it to a bad use.

Blount, though pitying, was not ill-pleased; he did not laugh—for he was a gentleman—till Clifford emerged, savage, dirty, and disappointed, passing up the bundle before him. Then, at sight of his bloody hand, painfully unrolling my gown and the spoons and two spade-guineas rolled in paper, he laughed boisterously, a never-ending peal of ever-beginning cachinnation. I felt glad I did not live in barracks, if such were barrack-manners: that evil laughter at another's pain and discomfiture, sounded to me like fiends

mocking at each other, for a failure in mischief. The whole plot was clear now:—they, unable to account for the Jacobite's disappearance leaving no trace, had advised together over the capabilities of the house for concealment—calling Bill Stovel into council. Hearing from him of this hiding-place, and suspecting that I, if anybody, was cognisant of his hiding, to be the one, they had written as though from Sandy to remind me of it in the expectation of my allowing the fugitive to avail of it. Thus it collapsed; yet it was not badly planned—for, granted I had really believed in Sandy's note, I might have thought of it as a temporary concealment. At Blount's, mirth M'Causland did not even smile, he was counting how many Bible-names had been blasphemed, and looking forward with some pleasure to hell-fire for Clifford.

Then they changed their clothes, M'Causland jealously refusing them any of Sandy's—spared not even his Sabbath suit. So Verney came down to supper looking like a parson, and Blount like a farmer who was also a ruffian. They ate a great deal. Blount told me he had been in my room, and loudly averred that it was a d——d ice-well—that I should be both warmer and comfortabler in barracks, mixed up with him for six months or so. I listened with complacence,

being satisfied that all was well now. Verney took my two spade-guineas, and bet Blount that he would win me five with them at *écarté*.

"You may win them," quoth Blount, "but Helen Rohan shan't lose them. No, by ——! give them back to her, sir!" and his hand flew to his sword.

Verney laughed, but passed them back, as at a joke of his friend's; and I wrapped them up anew in dozens of papers, to their intense amusement. So amused were they, and such vistas of wealth did the mention of cards produce in the minds of each, that, their clothes being partially dry, they drove the servants from the kitchen, changed them before its fire, and, having their horses brought round, galloped off to Letchford to make amends for their want of success at the farm by drinking and gambling at the Barracks.

M'Causland vouchsafed no explanation for all this fuss, beyond the meagre though satisfactory prophecy that "the devil would have his own day in Verney Clifford." Then, taking a candle, he went off to Sandy's garret, so lately profaned —as a good Catholic might to a rifled shrine. I profited by taking an ample supply of provision from the supper-table up to my room, together with a large jug of hot-water and a pair of M'Causland's warmed slippers, which had been

ingeniously lined with fur for him by Sandy. Then I followed to the garret, to make out if I could not sleep there, and leave my refugee in necessary solitude. Entering, the desolate look of the place struck me much, disordered as it was by its late visitors. There were several pairs of boots, caked with mud and clay; garments still bearing the form of the wearer—or so it seemed to me—hanging on nails; on the table a square pencil with blue lead at one end and red at the other, some ruled paper, a Bible and the Commentaries of Cæsar, a big wooden washbowl with some dirty water in it, a dirty fringed towel; on the bed, a trews, sporran, and dirk; In the wardrobe, amongst clean linen, some winter pears, and—ah, happy inspiration!—some woollen socks—(I put a pair in my pocket—for the Jacobite). That was all; surely he had been very cold here. I turned down the bed to look at the sheets. Cleanliness is not a cardinal virtue with Scotchmen, but these were not so bad; yet mine, mine were fine linen—lace-edged—fit for a queen. Elsie grumbled every washing-time, yet persisted in my using them, proud of them as they aired amongst homelier things at the kitchen-fire.

"Eh!" said M'Causland, noticing my reflective air, "puir Sandy! he lo'ed ye weel, an' it's not

on's bed ye shuld ha' been, but in it." Inferring that, of course, he meant after marriage. I listened. "Wi'," went on my uncle, "his strong arm and leal heart to protect ye, when I'm gane. An' now see what ye hae brocht him to!"

He brushed a tear from his eye. This arrangement had assuredly been settled in his mind for a long time.

"Now," he continued, "what hope hae ye? Will ye win again a selfless love like his?" (I thought of Sandy in the guardroom.) "Ye sit there dry-eyed, like a ghoul on a grave, an' to yere grave ye'll go empty-hearted, for ye reject all good men's love as 'twere dross."

I shivered:—in that dismal chamber the prophecy sounded sure. Was I Jezebel, and this a stern denunciatory prophet? What had I done? My tears seemed frozen and held back, but I trembled with mingled cold and pity. The flickering light showed him so old and grief-worn—perhaps his long tasselled nightcap aided the effect.

"Get ye to bed!" he said, noting my shivering, "carry yere witchcrafts awa' out o' the lad's chamber. Warm ye in yere down an' fine linen, like Dives."

"What are you going to do?" I asked, curiously, as he set down the light.

"Pack a few things for the lad," he replied. "Ah, Helen, a sair heart makes a rough tongue. Forgive me, dear! To think o' an orderly house being pillaged by soldiers!"

"Let me help you," I said.

"Na, na! gae ye to bed!" he said impatiently, "I sune be packed, an' then this room shall be locked an' kept free till my laddie comes hame. Gae ye to bed at once, Helen. Here, I'll licht ye." He held the door of the forlorn garret open, and, escorting me to my room, saw me safely in the door, shutting it with a clap as glad to be relieved of a troublesome inquisitor.

I was weary of men and their troublous ways. For a moment, I thought how the return of the half-drowned Jacobite would disturb the trimness of my chamber. I must fetch a couple of sacks from a pile kept folded in one corner of the kitchen. I went down resolving to island my guest on these till the downpour from his drenched garments should cease. But, meanwhile, I heard M'Causland go to his chamber and lock himself in with Sandy's relics, and there was a fine glowing gathering coal on the kitchen-hearth. Why not bring him in there? No one was stirring—Elsie deaf as stone, Elizabeth's snor-

ing audible even through the staircase-door, and, both regarding themselves as far above rubies, had locked themselves carefully in at the departure of Blount.

This overestimate of their market-value was at present useful, as neither was likely to come down. Wherefore, pinning a sack round my skirts, and putting another over my head as labourers use in wet weather, I opened the outer door: a gust of wind, a flood of rain swept me back, but, clinging to the handle, I succeeded in landing outside and closing it after me. No precaution was needed, noises never awoke them, and, as both regarded me as a sort of witch without a cat, had they known of it, this late excursion would have been assigned to some occult assignation with other bad spirits of which the less they noted the safer would they be. I was none afraid of any wild weather, and went on bravely, skirting the hedges, and so out into the midst of the field, over the lumpy turnips deluged with rain, to the inanimate black object—the mawkin, where I hoped to find a living presence. There was none. I gasped, growing fearful, and, getting a mouthful of rainwater, coughed. No one heard or heeded. Where had he gone? Holla, to a certainty yes!—a little low turnip-shed, for housing the roots,

stood not far off in one corner of the field; thither I betook me, musing on the utter selfishness of men, and there I found him, sitting on an upturned barrow, as much at ease as clinging garments and a keen wind would let him, with his sword across his knees.

"Sir," I said, reproachfully, "my brother, the mawkin, feels hurt at your desertion."

"We mawkins don't measure folk by their claiths, nor their claiths for them," he said, rising lazily, as though he rather enjoyed his lodgment—in sooth it was not so bad: nature at her worst is ever kinder than man—yea, even a lion with his paw on a prostrate victim, holds it less in dread than in a soothing stupor. I told him this, to which he replied:

"If you mean Blount by the lion, I'm afraid the soothing stupor would have to be preceded by a sword-thrust or two.

"Come, sit on this barrow, Helen, there's room for two. A soldier will always divide with a comrade in distress."

"Or distress a comrade? Come in, pray, I don't like the rain."

"I thought it was 'kind nature' 'soothing' and other pleasant things," he rejoined. "If it be so, kind nature has flung rivers over me, and I've had enough of her kindness."

"Yes, you are really damp enough," I said, "so come on, I came to fetch you as I promised."

To the stables, Helen Rohan?"

"No! They are unsafe. The horse-boy goes in with a lantern."

"To the keeping room?"

"No."

"Where to, then? Ah, ah, Helen! To my own room? Whose is that still small voice?" Then two ragged arms were held out, and a figure in a sack held in them, two beating hearts pressed together, a promise extorted under cover of rain and darkness and strong pressure.

"Without which," said the Jacobite aloud, "to return would be to stretch myself on the rack. As it is, I have suffered enough. Last night I was in hell!"

"Sir," I said, "you were in an armchair."

"To-night," he said, "my eidolon may sit there."

The rain now ceased for a time, but great banks of hurrying black clouds promised an early renewal. Leaving the old coat and the sacks in the shed, we gained the house before it began again, and, resisting my prayer that he should enter by the door and dry his drenched garments at the kitchen-fire, he climbed on to the thatch at its lowest part, and, with incredible

agility, gained my window, which had a wide ledge, and, pushing it open, went in. I lingered for a time by the fire, fighting a battle with conscience and honour. "It is early yet," I thought—(it was but nine o'clock)—"and he will repent of having threatened to go away on foot, to walk through Letchford, to brave every extreme, as (he said) misery doth ever for love of me. Soon he will sleep and forget me." I sat down on a settle, and began to dry my feet. The warmth influenced me in favour of stopping where I was—of sleeping, if one must sleep, in the dim vast kitchen. Soon I heard steps on the floor—M'Causland perchance—an arm round my waist, too damp to be my uncle's—a voice in my ear, prayers and tears, the sacredness of promises, the misery of being a fugitive, the terror of being alone. This lank shadow, coatless, hatless, with bare feet, which he protested were cold, though the hearthstone was warm, with a jangling sword round his waist, could not, nor would return to safety, "till I showed him the way."

"How, then, did you come down?" I asked, preparing to rid me of him by going to the foot of the stairs.

To this he made no answer, except to urge that I must show him the way—that he

might trip on the stairs or go into the wrong room.

"Then stay here," said I, "here is warmth and safety, and I faithfully promise, if it be your pleasure to sleep, that I will watch over and warn you of anyone's approach."

With this, he looked at me reproachfully, and asked had I lost all interest in him and his fortunes. My heart treacherously whispered "No," that I was all too engrossed with them. Then there was a long silence. His arm stole about my waist, his voice murmured in my ear like the sound of a distant sea, boding, though I knew it not then, shipwreck—the words in which it at length found utterance were of the irrefragability of a promise. I asked him, begging his pardon, what irrefragability meant, and he said it meant a poor soldier on his knees.

Then down on his knees he goeth. Ah me! "*Illa nocte mirum somniavi somnium!*"

Finding, in the morning, that, owing to the storm of the previous night, the hem of my pink gown was bemired and wet, I had to assume a blue camlet, stiff and straight in its folds, which, with its white neckerchief, gave me a quaint puritanical aspect, only partly relieved by the hard colours in a cairngorm clasp Alexis had given me, and which had been his mother's.

"This," said I to the Jacobite, who was looking from the window, "is a clear proof of man's inconstancy. A woman leaves this to her son, and he, to recommend his red curls, gives it to me, who value it only for its colouring."

"Ha!" said he advancing, "had the red curls no weight in its acceptance? Who was the man? Nay, I will know, and all about him too! For I have now a right, Helen." At this I was conscious I blushed terribly, feeling my face scorch and my eyes water, till both were hidden in his arms, and a voice, sweet to me as Hybla-honey, stifled conscience, in soft loving words, and honour in caresses and endearments. So overpowering had my love become, that no whisper of duty could enter my mind in his presence. All my hope, all my life centred in him. It seemed to me impossible even to exist where he was not. Often had I thought with calm scorn of love, and its self-sacrifice, as of a degrading surrender of mind to one dominant idea. Now no intellectual phantasm could exorcise from me this spirit, which fanned me to surrender with its purple plumes, and led me into a world where, king and sole sovereign, it reigned supreme.

A subtle fascination was in Stuart's manner, neither acquired by art, nor wholly bestowed

by nature. It could only be reconciled to reason by allowing a revival of the old belief in magic, in love-philtres; more probably, looking back upon it, 'twas the gracious refinement of the courtier, glancing from his handsome eyes—the courage and hardihood of the soldier, speaking in his careless yet animated tones. With or without reason, I loved him with heart and soul. When was the dawn of this overmastering passion? I was no more conscious of its rise, than a savage asleep in a cane-brake, when, on his closed eyelids, the crimson rays of the morning quiver, awaking him to the joy of existence. To me it seemed it had no beginning, for, as we at first stood by the Mere in the grey moonlight, no slightest interest attached to him in my mind, beyond the interest of common humanity. Nor, when seeing him at the Hall, had any warmer feeling been developed that I could trace. The first parting of the cloud, the first ray of warmth was the eager intense fire in his eyes when, for the second time, we stood on the gloomy shore of the lake and he told me, recklessly, who and what he was, casting caution to the winds. Was it, then, ambition that had helped on this love? All psychologists agree that women are more moved by that in their affections than are

men. It may be true, yet I feel I should have loved him had he been a Simnel and in disgrace, instead of a Stuart bravely striving for his own. Now I counted all dross that was not summed up in him, was desired by him, or met with his approval. Yet, said woman-craft, let him not learn the extent of his empire, or he will enslave his subject, then weary of submission.

"Let a woman love as she may, it is still as a woman, and not an angel," said he, resentfully, as, escaping, I rearranged at the mirror the kerchief his close embrace had ruffled.

"And how of a man?" said I, retreating a step or two to fix the brooch to advantage. "Is theirs the love of angels?"

"If to be all faith," said he, "and fire, to be a creature transformed from gross earth, to worship the air you breathe, to feel the lightest touch of your hand thrill through one's veins, to feel robbed and desolate in your absence—Helen, a woman's love is but weak and vapid beside a man's—a fire of straw beside a furnace. See," he continued, falling on his knees and kissing the hem of my gown, "Eastern hyperbole is with me but a slight expression of what I feel. Say you love me!—but no, I feel the soft icy air of your answer and shiver. Look at

me, and my faith will enshrine you as an Indian will an idol, though only for its diamond eyes."

This rhapsody, though sincere, amused me. Sandy would have said as much, could he have conjured up so many hyperbolic words. Yet I believed it all.

"Don't look at me," I said, smiling. "There are many better faces in the tapestry," and not seeing why mere life should weigh with a man if he sought for beauty, I gave a twist to the stiff curtain that brought before him the pictured face of Hagar, who, with dark eyes which had not faded, looked boldly out of the past into his face.

"She was sent into the desert deservedly," he said, scarcely looking at her. "But I, who love my mistress, get even more harshness. I am left in the desert."

Passing by warily at a distance, I left him to his virtuous discontent with things existent, and went down to our early breakfast, which we took by firelight—to-day being a market.

"You will be vera sorry to learn," said M'Causland, slowly, "that Verney Clifford was thrown last night, an' broke his leg. An' Blount an' his regiment's ordered off at last."

"What! milord thrown? Verney Clifford's leg

broken! What horse was he riding? So good a rider as he is, thrown?"

"A big brute of Colonel Blount's, a half-broke chestnut; he would spur it, and, his hand being hurt, he had but little hold on the reins. He is very much shaken besides."

"Where is he?" I asked.

"At Letchford — General Tremenheere took him in at Blount's request. He cannot be moved for some days. Sir Burleigh cannot move either: gout, Helen; an' grief for his fren'—he is afraid what might have happened to him."

Like a fool, I blushed so much at this that, had he not been preoccupied, he would surely have noticed it

"Are you going to Letchford? Sir Burleigh gave me this letter to Blount; it is about Sandy. I forgot it."

After a storm of words had been spent on me for this omission, during which I thought of Miss Tremenheere's cautious questions about Verney Clifford, I asked was she at home.

"Yes," said he, "she is waiting on milord. The General is ordered for the West next month; a draught of his regiment marched yesterday, and, Helen, be joyful, girl! — that woman who fixed on Sandy went wi' them! I gave her a couple o' guineas and some good counsel. Sandy is rid

of her for ever. Blount got a Government brew o' scoldin'; they say he made up this Jacobite story to get promotion for his zeal. An' they rate him as we rate a dog for a false alarm. It is certain Sir Burleigh had a friend there: he says it was but a cousin o' the laird o' Stellarig—but, ye ken, the Scots are all cousins. I hope an' trust this illboding gowk is miles eneuch awa' by now; doubtless he was a Jacobite, but 'tis not for us to say. Grant me, heaven, ane grip o' the chiel's craig if I find any such malingerin' about a decent peaceful homestead, bringin' disgrace an' suspect on it! Sae great a fule, too, he must be wha thinks he could shelter here—men an' women about at all hoors. An' you—keen as a falcon for all yer quiet ways—you wad ha' seen him, let him hide where he might. Verney Clifford's clean mad to think he suspectit ye, Helen; he thinks ye'll do him a damage wi' Sir Burleigh, an', to my certain knowledge, 'twas but the hope o' the money-reward set him sae crazy—he would eat his head for it noo. For there's you, says he, is his enemy, an' Sir Burleigh furious wi' him—an' him chin-deep in debt, an' laid by the heels. I heard him tell Blount all this, an' swear he'd do him a damage for leading him into it by offering the soldiers to search, an' a long preach-

ment aboot the thretty thousan' blood-money: 'Sure to get it,' said Blount to tempt him to join. Blount himself is downcast as a kicked hound. Verney's tongue, none sweeter for his hurt, is at him like a lash."

"Why does he stay near him to be so talked to?" I inquired.

"Hoot!" said M'Causland, "ye ken 'tis the General's quarters milord's in; an' Miss there, she's the light o' Blount's eyes, and she sides wi' Verney Clifford."

"You seem very much at home there, uncle?"

"I had to go aboot Sandy, ye ken, Helen. Between oursels, I hae given the Colonel mair gear than eneuch, an' he games it awa; but he is friendly to Alexis, an', when he is a bit 'on,' tells me much an' mair o' milord's sayin's, swearin' that, once afoot, he will challenge him for his attentions to Miss Tremenheere. Verney defies him; an' Miss, a sweet insipid dish she is too, will whiles side wi' baith. The General is the one stills their clavers; he is keen as east-wind, a warldly grey-woof. I fancy 'tis his report on the matter, got Blount his brew. By the way, the General desired his respects to you. Blount was speakin' of you: 'tis my belief he wad be talkin' o' women or cards, was he dying."

"I like the old General," I said—thankful, however, that it was not he who undertook the search for the Jacobite. M'Causland continued:

"Puir Sir Burleigh! he's expectin' a warnin' frae King George, an' it's brought on gout. Weel a weel! what brings him to mell with onprofitable Jacobites? But it's the hope of a barony, and love of the Stuarts—there is naething he wadna do or risk for them. I must go, Helen. I'll try beg a day's leave for Sandy—we may never see him again. Puir Sandy! he is e'en in the net an' the snare. We may ne'er see him again in this life, once awa' in the regiment!"

"Do not say so!" I cried, shocked at the reflection, and at my easy forgetfulness of him. "Bring him home with you—Colonel Blount will surely give leave, if only to make amends for his false suspicions here."

"Hoot!" said M'Causland, "he thinks naught o' that; 'tis a soldier's trade to ravage and destroy as they go, like locusts, sparing neither flower nor weed—evening wolves ravening for prey! As to Sandy, after his sinfu' falling awa' for vengeance sake, ye must be carefu' to hold out nae further hopes. For I will tell him in plain tairms that, marriet or not, he is not now for you."

With this resolution—in which I knew that

Alexis, free, would not acquiesce—he went out, mounted, and rode off.

I sent Elizabeth for a hantle of wool, and commenced some stockings, sitting by the fireside till the room was cleared; then I went upstairs with my knitting, a cup of hot coffee, and my news. Stuart was sitting sullenly at the table, apparently writing, in reality doing nothing. He pushed the coffee, which I set before him, angrily to one side. A scowl was on his face.

"Do not despond," said I timidly, thinking the gravity of his affairs wearied him to this petulance. "I wish I could help you to go. Shall I go and ask Sir Burleigh what to do? I want to see him, he is ill with gout."

"I forbid you going to Sir Burleigh. Ay, it is no use your putting on indignation. I have now a right to control your movements, and you shall not go to the Hall: my business will arrange itself, with Kilmarnock's aid. By ——! you are like the woman Spenser writ of, Hellenore, with her forest full of lovers. This commerce with Sir Burleigh points but to one conclusion. He is a man of the world, and no fool. Pray, how should I look to him, mewed up here, if I let you be my messenger? A pretty figure! He raised the coffee to his lips,

but, choking with passion for which I could imagine no cause, put it down untasted.

Bitter tears rose to my eyes at this assertion of authority, of mastery as of a sultan to a purchased slave—at this doubt thrown on my good-guidance. From others it might have been deserved, but from him—!

"Yes," said he harshly. "All your pretty country wiles will not change facts. You are now mine—a precious possession, doubtless, which yet I decline to share, like Cato, with my friend."

Opposite me, reflected in a mirror, stood a little figure in dusky pink, the unheeded tears stealing down its face, its head downbent, a dejected and melancholy face and form, its free grace and proud bearing quenched. I felt sorry for it, only half-recognising it as mine, as I should have sorrowed for any precious thing ignobly used. The colour, the attitude, gave it, to my eyes, the look of a broken rose—pathetic, had it been but a picture; but it was a marred life—a love degraded and despised, carelessly gained, to be trampled underfoot! Was this the love he had that morning professed so passionately?

The savage glance, with which Stuart was regarding me, softened—that was no more now

than the relenting of one who has struck to the death. For the first time in my life, I realised what misery meant:—a cold hopelessness; a gloom, quenching youth, deadening life. Like a high-spirited and favoured child who has been suddenly struck a cruel blow, I stood, unrealising aught but its cruelty; justice might demand it, its fault deserve—yet how bitter the agony of conviction that its faith in the forbearance of those it loved, was baseless—that for the future, and all time, it must servilely seek to fathom, patiently flatter uncomprehended moods. My heart beat dully—the sense of woe nigh suffocated me. I could not speak—my misery was voiceless.

"There! there!" said Stuart, approaching, "you need not take everything to heart in that tragic fashion: you have queened it so long over these old fellows, that you forget I am *autres choses*. Come," he continued, as I shrank from him, "this petulance shall not serve you—I will be obeyed, otherwise you will find me kind enough. Helen, you are not surely breaking your heart over a wry word? Dear, forgive me! Think of my heavy trials—my perplexities!"

Soothing away my grief by words of unbounded tenderness, by caresses, it still left a

faintness I could not overcome—a silence I could not break as yet.

"Do not make me wretched," said he, at length, petulantly. "Forgive me—forget this unkindness—you know it was not meant. Do you want a man all sugar, a sugar-candy soldier? Sir Burleigh pets you—the darling of home and of Hall. Ah! you were mighty ready to go to him! Achilles has no chance when Nestor is in the field."

"I like Patroclus best," I said, *pour parler*. "I was always sorry when I read the story of his death."

"Eh!" said he, "if you have read the Iliad, you have read a good thing. My Patroclus is Lord Kilmarnock—that's to say, so far as a modern friendship can Greek itself— But that is not the question: I want to be friends again. I can feel you shrinking from me. Truly, I am sorry; what degree of abjectness will content you, Helen? I writ an apology, calling myself in it—coward, beast, and devil. Since I must grovel to be forgiven, make your own terms. As fugitive, I must agree to them. Oh, wrathful dove and most magnanimous mouse! You let the lion out of the net, and now he is cruel. Come, let us make it up, sweetheart! Say that I was jealous: it would be inexcusable

were I free to follow you; but to see you go, and be forced to sit watching the door for your return, makes minutes hours, and induces wrathful thoughts of inconstancy, desertion, unkindness. Your readiness to go, though it was in my interest, angered me. Say I am forgiven. Say so, or I will stand by the door till midnight and keep you prisoner."

In effect, as 'twas necessary to escape, I forgave him, feeling sure that he was of a jealous and petulant nature, apt at taking offence; then blaming myself for misjudging him. It must, of necessity, be a fret and fatigue to be shut up. He, it is true, wrote a great deal:—so, thought I, should I be doing—or arrears would accumulate. I had no sooner seated myself at the desk than Elizabeth entered. Sir Burleigh had sent a message that he wanted either M'Causland or myself at the Hall, thus reopening the whole coil, perhaps renewing the quarrel, as I could not leave the house without apprising him of my absence.

"Very well," said I, apathetically, not at all inclined to go, afraid of his questioning me.

"Craig didna wait," said she. "He's a dour, sour puritan fellow, is Craig—he just gives his word an's off without a civil greeting, Craig is!"

Elizabeth's mistrust of soldiers did not apparently extend to civilians, or Craig's reticence would not have offended her. She went off to the kitchen and discussed Craig with Elsie, who doubled every damnatory and doubted every saving clause in the estimate of the Scotch valet, half whose lack of manners and speech was due to shyness.

"How," thought I, embarrassed, "am I to go? Casimir confessed to be here, the instant inquiry of where is he?—in what hole or corner hidden?—is unanswerable; now, yet unanswered, will be inferred. Sir Burleigh will be equally angered with both—with me, furious; and, M'Causland called in to counsel, speedy judgment, sharpest justice dealt to me. Him they will exonerate—his immediate peril, his ignorance of the house, sufficient safeguards. To me disgrace—contumely; to him a safe and speedy means of departure. I could not go—I would not. A dozen pens I mended to extinction of their use, finally cutting my finger with the penknife, and sucking the blood, ghoul-like, as I pondered the problem: "I love the one," was the solution, "I must reject the other of these two masters."

"Did I indeed love him?" My heart beat more with fear, as I repaired upstairs to ac-

quaint him with this peremptory summons, resolving to advise his going himself to the Hall at night, and giving as plausible an explanation as might be to his friend. "Men do not blush," thought I bitterly envying them this immunity from weakness, "and he will look Sir Burleigh in the face and not stammer, nor say a word about me I am sure. Closing the lobby-door I stood on the steps and knocked at mine. Casimir opened it, in some surprise at my sudden reappearance, which I saw alarmed him as an omen of danger.

"It is nothing," said I to reassure him, "but a summons from Sir Burleigh. I must let you know when I leave the house, lest by any chance any should enter here. It is unlikely: yet keep the door fast—they will think I have the key away with me."

"Don't go," said he, "for God's sake! Cannot you see how strong are my objections to your seeing Sir Burleigh just now—not alone on my account, but on yours? He can imagine me escaped, but, once face to face with him—questioned—"

He paused, a dark flush rising to his brow, then continued:

"All my reasons I cannot tell you, Helen; but, believe me, it is best he should suffer anxiety

rather than know where I am. In a day or two, I shall hear from Kilmarnock, who knows my whereabouts and will manage an escape. Why should I further endanger Sir Burleigh to no purpose?—he has only just scraped through as it is!"

"After this, I could not suggest my plan of his going to the Hall himself, my difficulty being that he might in anger run some great and terrible risk of capture. For all I knew, though absent, Verney might have the whole place watched for him."

"There is no risk, absolutely none," I answered, "for me. I will not say where you are; and, no ill-news of you being abroad, he must conclude you safe!"

"Go, then!" said he, sullenly. "Since it is your will to disoblige and disobey me, I have no power either to prevent or punish. I shall be ruined with Sir Burleigh—for what extenuation will he find for me?—nor do I deserve any from him! Yet, Helen, I thought you loved me."

"That is not the question," said I, willing to tease him. "My duty is to Sir Burleigh: him I have never disobeyed. I need not tell him you are here."

"How could you hide it?" said he, smiling through his anger and agitation. "You are

blushing like a rose. Sir Burleigh is a man of the world, let me tell you, and not inapt to connect cause and effect. Suppose his referring to me met with such a blush by way of answer? Nay," said he, as I hid my face in his arms, "there is nothing to blush for, but men do not judge one another lightly, and Sir Burleigh, though my good friend, must just now be avoided, let him be never so anxious. You are my first care: promise me you will not go, nor see him!"

I promised with a heavy heart. Sir Burleigh's constant, unvarying kindness, shown rather in deeds than words, reproached me. In bitter anxiety he would be awaiting news of his friend, who carelessly chose his own comfort and safety rather than its relief. Then a ray of comfort came to me:—M'Causland, on his return, would certainly go, and he could compromise none.

In an opposing mirror—a small convex one, of steel, fixed high up in the wall for ornament—I saw our two forms reflected, each diminished to fairy-stature. One, a pink-robed puppet with bronze hair and pale face; the other, a long-limbed Highland figure with blue eyes and a pointed chin, whose arms were wreathed round the little figure in

pink. These I pointed out to him, and he laughed.

"What pretty little people we are, Helen! I suspect we look just so, seen from Olympus, or Heaven, or wherever our judges live, and they think: 'A pity to punish such little creatures!—let them enjoy themselves their own way!' 'Tis what I should say, if I were Jove."

"Unluckily, sir, our judges are for the most part on our own plane, and diminishing steel-mirrors are rare; but I like them—they make even you handsome."

"Even me!" he laughed. "The Marquise Briancourt thinks me a handsome fellow."

"It is a bad plan to think aloud," I said with a little pain in my voice, "for now even a jest which glances at memory of another woman, is pain."

The day is wearing on apace. It is early April; instead of fugitive showers chased by sunshine, we have sullen downpours at intervals, filled in with dull low-hanging clouds; it is cold too, and I feel regret at leaving the prisoner alone, a prey to anxious thought and dreary reflection. I hope his friend will come soon and free him from this ungracious inaction. "Let what may come of it," think I, "he shall have a fire now," and, without apprising him of my in-

tention, I go down to the parlour, bringing up, in a shovel, a large burning log, following this up with a return-journey and an armful of oak-billets, which I build up on the hearth; the draught from the wide chimney soon helped to kindle them all into a cheerful blaze, and I see how acceptable is the provision as he, protesting against my taking the trouble, stands beside it. There is always plentiful provision of logs in the ingle of the parlour: these I rob freely, and, drawing the curtains, provide him with a book to read by firelight.

"What is it?" he says suspiciously, as I put it into his hands with a laugh? Theology?"

"No; look and see!"

Reading the title, he laughed too. It was:—

Religious Courtship:
On the Necessity of choosing none but
Religious Husbands and Wives.
Historical Discourses.

"Ah!" said he, "who gave you this?"

"My cousin Sandy, sir, bought it for me of a pedlar; and for a good while afterwards he gave up Cæsar's Commentaries and read the Bible."

"Ha!" said he with a smile, "that is the red-headed cousin, who also gave you the brooch? Where is he now?"

"In Colonel Blount's regiment," said I with a sigh, warming my foot at the logs, now bright enough. "But," I add, remembering, "he is coming here to-night, on leave. I must go."

"When it is quite dark," said he, throwing down the book angrily, "I shall go for a ramble in the fields, and, if I do not return, consider my adieux said, my thanks rendered till I can safely write."

"Very well," said I, in stunned surprise at this sudden resolution; then, recovering—seeing in it but an acute attack of temper on Alexis' account—I said coldly: "Let me first bring your supper. It will soon be on the table. You need not go starving."

"'She brought him butter in a lordly dish,'" said he, rising. "Jaël—why Jaël was merciful to her captive. It is true she killed him sleeping, but you hammer nails into my heart every hour."

"What have I done now?"

"What have you left undone? In a few minutes you will be beguiling that hulking soldier. I seem to see it. By ——! I will not stand it!—either remain with me or I will go."

"I tell you I cannot remain with you, and, if you mean clumsiness by 'hulking,' Alexis M'Causland is the handsomest man I have ever

seen—neither awkward nor ill-informed; and a Highlander too!"

"There must be but one Highlander for you, in the whole world; and, if it is to be this kinsman—this book-giving, pearl-bestowing cousin—say so!"

"It is this book-giving," I took the book from him, "amiable. Now let me go. You will find two sisters in that book, each more amiable than the other." Leaving him pacified, I went downstairs, carrying with me a headache and depression. Tears even stole into my eyes at thought of the coil in which I stood, and, on Sandy's entering, I suffered to be taken in his arms and kissed as of old, without rebuking him as he expected. M'Causland, glad and happy at this apparent reconcilement, leaves the room to give orders.

Sandy, glad, surprised, yet a trifle suspicious—for he too has encountered the hard real world and put away childish things—bids me not cry and smooths my hair already smooth as satin; nay, is getting more glad—less surprised, and none suspicious, as his honest heart wakes and thrills with pleasure at this greeting. "Oh, Sandy," is all I can say, "I'm sorry I was ever cruel to you!" Here I thought of the forlorn written apology of the man who called himself

in it—coward, beast, and devil; yet what had he of cruelty to charge himself with beside mine to Alexis?

"It could not be helped," said Sandy, distressed at my late repentance and kissing me many times.

"Perhaps you thought I meant the guard-room?" I said, recovering myself somewhat and ruffling up his red curls, for I could not be respectful to my vassal long.

"No, I didna think sae," said Sandy a little consciously. "For a' that, Helen, yese best beware o' soldiers. It's in the air they breathe, an' it's the breath o' their nostrils."

"What is?" I asked, cautiously withdrawing.

"Kissing, and—and—a' that," said Alexis.

"Then don't you do it, Sandy; you were not bred a soldier."

"Ou, ay!" said Sandy promptly, "but I was born a man, Helen Rohan."

"Sandy," I said, coming nearer and whispering in his ear, "tell me quick—where is that woman?"

"I dinna ken," said Sandy, "she went off wi' one o' Tremenheere's troop to France. I'll ne'er see her again, Helen. It was na a marriage—not a right one, I am free. Blount bid her begone."

"Are you, then, a widower?" I asked, a little

awestruck at Sandy being promoted to anything so serious. He looked serious too, then laughed at the idea.

"No, I'm not rightly a widower—I was never marriet right, ye ken; she had a husbandt living then, and many knew of it."

"She is like the woman in Scripture with seven husbands, Sandy! Whose will she be—ultimately?"

"Not mine, by —— !" said Sandy energetically. "I disown her; now leave talking of her, Helen. Thank the Lord she's in France, perhaps dead!"

"Relatively," I mused, walking away from him, "I am to Stuart what this woman was to Alexis. Would he, if talking to some high-born woman (who would be lovely), should she by any chance have heard of me, speak in this lofty, contemptuous way, and would not she listen and feel it to be true, as I believed Sandy?" It was too-too bitter to realise. Perhaps this poor wretch had been the idol of some humble home. Why had I not been kinder to her?

"Helen, ye are unhappy," said Alexis, who was watching me, and who now approached and placed his arm protectingly round me. I doubt na my going has been made grievous for ye, in my wrath I helped on, but forgive me.

If ye couldna love me, ye couldna; but I hae a sword," said Alexis, "an' a Highland heart, and I'd cut the man to mince wha grieved or hurt ye, an' ne'er ask ye for why, nor him for his story."

"That would be unjust!" I said hotly. "At that rate, any wicked woman—"

"Men don't pawn their honour to wicked women," said Sandy grimly. "They gie them gifts—and there's Scripture to that—but not their heart's blood."

I began to feel dizzy and exhausted, and sat down. Alexis seated himself beside me and drew my head on to his shoulder. M'Causland bustled in, and, seeing that we seemed happy—for it was dusk, and he could not see our faces—he made a feint of scolding me for not going to the Hall, and said he must go himself, but would return to supper. Blount had granted Alexis leave till twelve o'clock.

By degrees, a great silence fell on us. It was not the silence of passion, but of thought. We were each away in a world of our own. Elizabeth came in and cast fresh logs on the fire; it blazed up, lighting up the room. He rose and stood before it.

"Do ye paint?" said Alexis, suddenly; "your cheeks are scarlet!"

"No," I said, wearily, "I am getting old, Sandy, and weary, and worn out."

"At eighteen, Helen?"

"Yes. Why not? The world was young when it was destroyed for wickedness: why not me?"

"Eh! but I didna think they would ha' scoldit *you* to this!" said Sandy, with keenest self-reproach — thinking, poor fellow, that M'Causland's unheeded lectures were the cause of my disquiet. "But," I continued, "we must make your last visit cheerful; will you play draughts, Sandy, or backgammon?"

"Ay, I will so!" he said eagerly, having had enough of thinking—and besides contracted a love of gaming which made even this mild form of it pleasant. So we sat down to our amusement, and grew less emotional and pleasanter over it. Like most Scotchmen, Alexis had some of that dry, caustic humour which is a national characteristic, and so happily hit off various of his barrack-mates, including our mutual friend the Sergeant, that our mirth sometimes grew noisy, for I could not in my heart stop his pleasure this last time we might see him for years.

M'Causland, as he had promised, returned to supper; and, with abundant whiskey, they both

grew happy enough. All Sandy's sentiment departed, doubtless to return next day, and by ten o'clock he was anxious to be gone, M'Causland going a bit with him—which meant, in his *exalté* mood, all the way—it was even doubtful if he would return that night. I put on my long cloak and walked beside their horses—being lifted to the stirrup to say good-bye—soldier-fashion. Then, instead of returning, I went to the turnip-field, feeling sure that there I should find Casimir.

"There you are in good sooth," said I cheerfully, "wandering about in this grey purgatory. Why did you not run away?"

"You hoped I should?"

"No, truly. M'Causland has been over to the Hall. Sir Burleigh is not alarmed about you. Shall I tell you what he said?"

"No," said he ungraciously, seeming anxious and depressed. "I cannot understand Kilmarnock's not having discovered me ere this: he has scouts who beat red Indians as trackers, and assume any character."

"Let us go in search of him," I suggest, "I want to see Kilmarnock, badly."

Some laughing demon had seized me, and, the more persistently grave and sad he became, the more I laughed; at length he said grimly:

"Your Highlander seems to have amused you."

"Which Highlander, sir?"

"The one who gave you the 'Religious Courtship.'"

At this I nearly choked, thinking of Sandy in the guardroom, and his humble imitation of Bothwell. The tragic tone and manner of Louis Casimir helped on the mischief.

"I have never laughed so much before!" said I, penitently and sorrowfully, seeing that it increased his disquiet. "Forgive me!"

So we wandered about in the soft, still darkness of the April night, but no messenger came; patches of star-sown sky shone through the rack of clouds; and, when all the house was still, we returned to it, through the kitchen and by way of the parlour. A sober and serious mood held me now; my hands grew cold in his as we stopped and looked around on the room—large, homely and comfortable, immaculately clean and trim, a few embers flickering on the hearth. All the ghosts of former years trooped past; the scene wherein I had saved Stuart seemed to belong to the far-off past. I could not credit that I was the same Helen Rohan; that one was a grave and steadfast ruling spirit, high, pure, and proud; this a wild and revelling

Bacchante, a thing of tears and laughter, of mood and impulse, dominated by another, yet unwilling to be free—a forest Hellenore.

As I had conjectured, M'Causland did not return that night ; and next day brought the news that Blount's regiment was to start, in a week's time, for Ireland.

" Till when I shall be safest here," said Stuart, with an hypocrisy I had not credited him with ; and he set forth an array of reasons—which mightily convinced neither of us, but with which we were more than content — why it would be safest to wait Kilmarnock's coming.

Every day M'Causland went to Letchfold : he even joined in card-playing with the Sergeant, Sandy's military godfather, in order to propitiate him. Blount he bribed almost openly to promote Alexis, paying him twenty guineas down ; and in consequence I heard a rapturous account of how handsome Sandy looked as an officer—for so his uncle proudly described it—and how Blount had taken to the young man, to whom he had at first been so harsh, and treated him "like a brother," how even Lord Clifford had put in a good word for him. It was, in short, Alexis' apotheosis after martyrdom.

All these items of news I carried to the Jacobite. I wrote letters for him to various

madams. The first I spoilt, by letting tears drop on to it, which he, unobservant, was about to fold and seal; then, opening it on a sudden, he demanded, in anger, if ever man had so bad a secretary before.

"Sir," I said, "I will do better—but I like not writing to that woman."

"What woman, patient grizzle?" quoth he.

"That madam there, to whom you relate all your affairs, of whom you ask counsel, to whom you tender thanks and express affection. Suffer me to write to men—that I will gladly do."

"Of that I make no manner of doubt. Copy that fairly Helen and at once."

Full of rage and grief, I obeyed, driving back my tears with one hand, which kept it almost continually employed—a sufficiently silly spectacle to him, no doubt. Drying my tears, with this reflection, and also thinking how the rouged and patched madam would, could she see me, scorn at me, I toiled through the long letter unnerved, and he added to it a signature I could not see; then, folding it, dictated the address:—

Mistress Fraser,
The Canongate,
Edinbro'.

"She goes by another name, also," he said composedly.

"Yes?" said I, with calm interrogation, adding, "You need not tell me, as we shall never meet."

"That it is very likely you may do, since I wish it," said he. "Fie! what a fiery temper! Your eyes blaze like two fierce stars!"—seizing my hands and looking into my face, which I strove to hold downward. "It is but fair your turn should come, Helen! Your friends cause me uneasiness enough. Am I to have no friend but you?"

"I am sure," I said, with an attempt at indifference, "that I wish all the world friendly to you, and everyone loyal."

"I wish my friends could see you, Helen!"

"A plain-bred country-girl is no such great matter, and I have no wish to be a gazing-stock to——"

"Kilmarnock! Come! come! I was but teasing you; yet it is cruel sport. He is only 'madam' till times mend. I have many thus addressed in both countries."

He wiped away my tears, which now flowed fast. I thought it a wretched jest, yet forgave him, and returned to writing. Many letters I wrote to 'Mistress' this and that, and he franked

them from a list of names sewed in the lappet of his coat.

"Our people," said he in explanation, "who will acknowledge them as theirs."

I may here note that various ways of spelling, some illiterate as a peasant's, were used in the composition of these letters. The King *de facto* was often named as a bodily disorder, notably in one case as a tumour. Money and men had other names bestowed on them—that, in case the letters miscarried, it should seem as one simple gossip writ to another of her needs, housewifery, or ailment.

Under Stuart's direction, who owned he disliked writing, a good many letters were got through. Every time I glanced up at him, I could not avoid wishing that ambition were banished the world, and love alone reigned—that he might be a country laird, and I his scribe and writer.

"Helen," said he, in perplexity, "how are these to be got unobserved to the London post which the coach conveys to the North?"

"I will manage that," I said, confidently. "I will get them put in the regimental post-bag. The Sergeant rides with it to meet the coach every week—he is generally drunk, and I can easily bribe him to put them in. Thus Hanover

will help on your cause, sir, with his own soldiers. It goes to-night."

Very tired was I when I returned that night from Letchford, having lingered in a road outside the town, witch-like, to watch for the Sergeant. It was pretty dark, and he was riding, jangling by, half-drunk, when I stopped him.

"Sergeant!" I called out, "don't you know me?"

"No, Miss," he admits, reluctant enough, but readily stopping.

"From the farm," I said, omitting names—for I saw he was tipsy.

"Eh!" he said, "there's many farms hereabout, and many a heartache for us soldiers."

"Elizabeth," I murmured, thinking of hers, and how she needs no longer lock herself up.

"Ay! Elizabeth, so it is!" he assents, deceiving himself (so how was I to blame?)—"Elizabeth, sure enough! In service hereabouts, Miss?"

"Yes," I said, "but my man"—here I blushed, but it was dark—"is in London, and I want this letter put in your bag to post, unknown to my mistress, who is somewhat severe."

"I will take it for you, my dear—never heed your mistress." Then he opened the bag, into which I slipped some twelve letters unperceived.

Then he was for kissing me, but I told him a quart of double ale, the price of which I gave him, should be enough for so small a favour.

"Small!" he grumbled. "If you knew our Colonel—"

"Good-night," I said, making quickly off into the darkness.

"Good-night, Elizabeth," he called after me, stopping for some response which should guide him in pursuit, but he waited in vain and soon trotted off, and I went wearily homeward, amused and elated as to mind, but feverish, weary, and outworn in every jaded limb. No longer a fleet and fresh country-lass, thinking a few miles nothing of a walk, but a tired *intrigante*, helping on plots, and plotting to deceive my friends and kind guardians—for love of a stranger. Yet would I, had it been necessary, have helped him with my life!

Awaiting my return, he was seated near the door—his sword, unsheathed, lying on the table. His first anxiety was for the letters; reassured as to their safe posting, he was alarmed at my evident fatigue and exhaustion. I sank to sleep in the armchair, too tired to do more than remove my dusty boots and beaver bonnet, finding in the morning that he had sat beside

me, wakeful, through all the long hours of the night.

"Someone is calling you," a whisper awoke me. It was Elizabeth at the door announcing breakfast. On my answering, she retired, and, hastily bathing my face and brushing my hair, I was for going off, like Cinderella, slipperless, but that was soon rectified, for, despite all my protestations, Stuart went on his knees and fitted on my slippers for me.

Risk and hazard bring with them a certain hardihood and composure which seem incredible in the relation, and to be but the effect of after-imagining; yet, granted the courage of performance, the composure attends it as certainly as shadow attends substance—'tis a natural law, or there were no successful concealments.

I thought thus when, entering the room, I found Stuart reading the silly and pragmatic book "Religious Courtship," and even laughing over it.

I drew it from his hands, and, holding it above his head, inquired to which of the sisters depicted therein he most inclined. He retook it, reading aloud :—

"Oh, dear! an 't please you, I should be a dreadful wretch if I should not be thankful.

What would become of me if I had nothing but what I deserve?"

"Sir," said I, austerely, "I don't like being made a jest of!"—for he laughed.

"Helen, to read to you from a book of your own providing is not making a jest of you!" Turning over the pages with one hand, guarding it from me with the other, he reads on:—"'The happy life of the youngest sister, and the miserable condition of the second sister, who rashly threw herself into the arms of a man of differing principles from her own, though blessed with all the good humour in the world.' *(C'est moi.)* 'Of differing principles.' Let us go into it, Helen, and confute this idiot author, who would imply that to be happy, to love, one must be a mere echo of the other. Why," he continued, half-indignantly, "was you as proud and sullen as myself, what charm would you have for me? It's your wit, and that sort of air you have of Hellenic intelligence—a lofty little philosopher—which attracts and amuses—ay! and impresses an irresistible charm on you. Now for our author: 'Differing principles,' eh! Let us dispose of them. Are you for Hanover?"

"Not altogether so!"

"Any for Stuart?"

I was silent; the light sparkled in his bright

blue eyes as, intent on his pastime he turned over the foolish pages. I longed to take it from his hands again and cast it away—not for its teasing me, but that it kept his attention.

"Here's a disclosure," he said, presently: "'I dare not trust myself to see him, I am pretty well over it by now, but if I see him again I know not what influence my own weakness may have upon my resolution, for I own to you, sister, I have no aversion to him.'" He laughed as he read this. "Let me see, a score of marks on this passage and H.R. against it."

"Sir, I saw you mark it. Prove to me those letters are not yours? Aha! a pencil is in your hand!"

"Don't touch me with those silky sleek fingers of yours, Helen, they electrify me. I can read no more now were you to pray me to!"

"So much the better. Your ideal of excellence might grow too great."

"You are my present ideal. Nay, thus challenged I could not say less, assure yourself. But, truly, what starched minxes were those! Thank God I had none such to trust to for my escape—eh, Helen!"

I sighed. A little thought of the good women in books came to me:—of Isabella, who re-

pulsed Lord Angelo; of sprightly Rosalind and sweet Celia. From a reverie I was drawn back to reality by a kiss so loving, lingering, and grateful in its intensity, that all else than thankfulness to have aided him faded from my my mind. So I answered to his query lightly enough:

"Sir, there are none such, out of books."

"Sweet!" said he. "Do you forget the pearls and diamonds of wisdom and discretion that dropped from your lips when counselling me as one whom you then thought to be some vagabond Jacobite trespassing on Burleigh Manor—your cold icy air of wisdom? What a meeting was there! Fate's subtillest web wove it: we were to meet. I could not have lived without you: you are a part of me—an Eve created for me. Nothing could have prevented our foreordained destiny. Oh, my dear, put aside as a pernicious lie any book or any statement that says a man or woman met and loved, saw and sighed for each other, yet wilfully passed by on the other side. 'Tis not in nature."

"Hard partings have chanced even to lovers as true as are we—bitter separations, cruel hardships, but not by their own will, as writers assert falsely. That is where they err. They

build an ice-figure, clothe it in heroic drapery, and, naming it human, deny its humanity."

"My darling, do you repent rescuing me? Tell me, truly in a word, your poor prisoner! My whole soul craves for your true answer! Sweet! do not torture me!"

"No," said I, reflectively; "but that you know—nor shall not while you love me."

"Which will be for ever, Helen!—for ever! for ever!"

The passion in his eyes carried conviction to my soul. I felt that, but once in my life, would a strong man tremble at touch of a woman's hand. He raised mine to his lips, imprinting a kiss on it.

"Now," said I, returning (though loth) to realities, "it is our dinner-hour, which must not be missed. Farewell for awhile."

"What!" said he, holding my hand lingeringly, "a rose dine? Yes; 'marry and shall,' as the playbook says. A damask-rose feed?"

"Even so!—and, returning with *pour diner* for you, will hear you sigh over old tradition and say: 'The woman tempted me, and I did eat.'"

Escaping with that, I went below. The noisy kitchen-dinner was proceeding. All the men to be fed, Elizabeth had no time to wait on our

table, at which I was alone; so I carved a portion of dainty capon for the prisoner, who, spite of love and fate, was not indifferent to it—or he had been but foolish, since love will not suffice alone as aliment. He did not even affect indifference to it, nor to the farm-made cheese. The fritters and cream, and Highland whiskey proved that it held attraction even for a Jacobite in love. I was indeed glad that I had power to soothe and charm so haughty and sensitive a spirit, since I was convinced that, to a cold or coarse gaoler, even the same duty rendered would scarce have induced him to eat, in his then circumstances. Carrying down the dishes, I was but just in time. Elizabeth bounced in angrily from the kitchen, followed by a roar of laughter. Some joke, carried to extremes, had vexed her, and, to cover her confusion, she affected zeal in clearing the parlour-table. I I was thankful, though I had lost my own dinner, that I was in time. The many minute risks I ran were almost more than I could guard against—witness this one.

Afraid to reprove her rude and rough entry, while she, in her preoccupation, was unconscious of my lean and hungry aspect, I yet kept back enough apple and cream to feast on when she should have gone, unremarked, which,

with bread and cheese always kept in the room, served for dinner to the "damask rose."

Late that night, all the household hushed in sleep as still and stirless as the dead, I was at the window on guard while Stuart slept, trying to think calmly of the unhappy parting now imminent, whilst his head showed sunk deep into the downy pillow, and his closed eyes, and firm haughty mouth, made him look handsome, spite of the haggard and haunted expression which shadowed all his face even in sleep. I heard from without, as he had predicted would be the case to-night, the dreaded signal thrice repeated, bearing some slight resemblance to the cry of a curlew. I would have waked him, for so were his orders; but, before I could stretch out my hand, he sprang up—in his dreams he must have heard it—and seized his sword.

My heart died away. At last he was going!—and I could not even rejoice for his sake.

"Helen," he said, "you are now rid of me." Despite his excitement, his lip quivered as he held out his arms. "God bless you, dear!" He could utter no more; again came from without the low, yet distinct cry. "It is Kilmarnock," he said, listening, "one of my most trusty friends. Now, Helen, be calm, or I cannot go—my very

soul aches at parting with you; it will not be for long. I will send and tell you how I fare, or you can join me in France." I thought he spoke coldly, and shivered.

"Go," I said, miserably, unclasping my arms. "You will forget me; do not send to me. People are not tormented in their graves. I will see you go, and then die."

"Helen, this is foolishness. Neither shall you come down; would you have Kilmarnock see you?"

"What is Kilmarnock to me?" I said despairingly. "I should stifle and die if I stayed here. Suffer me to see you go."

Meeting with no further opposition, I crept downstairs, while he went from the window, and so out into the home-close meadow. There I looked about me:—yes, there they stood in the dim moonlight, obscured by hurrying dark clouds; near them, two high and fiery-looking horses standing, half-hidden by the pile of faggots. I came round, careless of Kilmarnock, who lifted his Highland bonnet and stared.

"Why will you come?" said Stuart angrily, noting this surprised gaze, as he moved away to examine the saddle of his horse, the priming of his pistols.

"Madam, your goodness will come home to

you," said Kilmarnock obligingly, yet in a tone I could not quite feel satisfied with, though tone or words mattered little to me then, my eyes following Stuart.

"Do not influence him against going," he said more anxiously, seeing my dumb agony in my face. "It is a hard chance and great risk that he has brought on us by lingering here so long."

"Sir," I said, for my throat swelled, "others have hard chances and great risks." Tears rained through my fingers, held before my face. That now he should more regard his horse than me, was acute mortification. Turning away, I was for going.

"Stay," said Kilmarnock, who had more reason than I wotted of to distrust the impetuosity of his friend's temper, and was in evident anxiety. "Be calm, madam, for God's sake! or he will come back with you for quarrelling's sake!"

By this time he was some little distance off, pacing the horse, "taken up with it," thought I bitterly, like a child with a new toy.

"You shall see him again," said Kilmarnock soothingly. "He is not really inconstant, only so in appearance, and never forgets a friend."

"I have sown the wind," I say bitterly, "and

shall reap most justly the whirlwind, as do others."

"Ah!" said Stuart, coming back blithely, "another victim, Helen! Kilmarnock, that was my secretary, protector, and civil and religious counsellor. It is a heavy parting and bitter to me!" So saying he was for embracing me, but, giving a hand to each and wishing them a safe journey, I watched them mount and ride off, whispering eagerly of other things—myself forgot.

Albeit, unused to indulge in excessive emotion, after a vague effort at self-control—vague and vain—I flung myself, or rather was seized by an overmastering agony and flung on the wet turf at the base of the woodstack, where the grass grew tall and rank, and stinging-nettles and docks flourished in juicy luxuriance; and, through their cold deafening, heard the distant tread of the horse's feet which bore the Jacobite away to his friends. Through it all, I had no doubt of his ultimate escape; but so great, so strong a hatred of his cold cruelty to me held me, that, had Blount at that instant brought him back in triumph, tied by cords to his saddle-bow, I would have felt—

"No, no!" I cried out, aloud, "this will pass away!" and I raised myself up, weeping, and sat with my arms round the hound Sandy's neck,

who had stolen through the darkness and the rain to comfort me. And what rain! the drizzle increased to a downpour, the downpour to a torrent. To me it seemed sent as a cleansing-tide to a land plague-stricken and accursed; and I sat erect whilst, as by pailfuls, the cold fresh softness was flung over me by Mother Nature. Had I not always been the soul, the inner self of purity? Now I should be dissolved into dew, sink into the earth to reappear as daisies—as something white and trim, tasting of the country, yet with a ruby heart to redeem from inanity. What rivers, what roads, what heaths, were now between me and the Jacobite! What worlds, rather—what centuries—what Polar seas! If he again returned—if I again loved him, it would not be with that passion of the heart and mind that makes a love complete—one—indivisible. This sorrowful sighing was the travail of the mind for ever parting from the love of the heart. If he returned, I should love him, but not with the glow and warmth, the essence, the soul of love. All that for ever fled with our parting, washed away in the cold purifying chill downpour that fell over my drenched limbs, and seemed to say:

"You elected to leave Love behind and follow 'Fame,' and, at the outset, step into the

leper-house of my rival, Pleasure! After this, return to me purified—forgiven!" Holding up my drenched hands and streaming eyes in the darkness, I cried out for pardon and renewed my promise. Alas! that love, which is so sweet, should be a snare! That to seek sympathy, is to invite an assassin who enters disguised and takes our dearest life from us! We should be prudent, says age, afar off on its glaciers; while youth, gathering the sun-warmed roses, laughs till the scattered leaves fall and elude it!

Condolence was not much in fashion at Burleigh Manor, yet the morning following the Jacobite's flight, when M'Causland's favourite horse came in bedraggled—his saddle, the girths slackened by rain, slipped under him; his knees broken and his mouth chafed—Sir Burleigh, hearing of it, sent a laboured line to his steward, enclosing a twenty-pound bank-bill, and telling him not to mind about the d——d horse, a big D supplying the place of a more explicit imprecation. M'Causland, who before was "minding" very much, pocketed the money, ordered the horse a warm mash, and said no more about it.

The labourers, reticent by nature and habit—slow and sluggish—made no marvel of the

matter. The very one who was bribed, having bemused himself with beer at Letchford and muddled himself over speculations about the invasion of the place by soldiers, got it into his head that its rider was Lord Clifford, and said to me warningly, on our meeting:

"Ne'er ye go, Helen Rohan, an' gie a Clifford the maister's best nag agen. They be all hard riders o' other volks nags, they be; an ye'd gi'en the word, he shouldn't ha' had it—no, not for two guinea, mind ye that!" So my name had been used in the matter.

So time closed over the Jacobite, enclosing him in the amber of our memories, like some gad-fly that had troubled our peace. And Sir Burleigh, not sorry for having the long-dreaded black draught of the Government warning and the Stuart's visit over, let the warm April weather cure his gout, and returned with renewed zest to his farming and woodland work. It was a warm day in the third week of April when, knowing that Verney Clifford was still away, I went, taking with me the remains of an influenza-cold, to the Manor woods—to the lake like Phlegethon, and in its black depths I saw a face paler than the colourless primroses washed by many rains. I had been ill for three weeks, loathing the ledgers, which, after a vain

attempt at posting himself, M'Causland had remitted to his master, and I was now on my way to request their return—a new dark-blue silk-hat on, which I chronicle because M'Causland dated my recovery from its appearance—a hat mysteriously sent by Sir Burleigh, who had written with his own hand, to London, an order, the draught of which I subsequently saw among his paper, for a bonnet of silke and taffetas to be sent at once, and with it, to me, came the appended note:—

"HELEN ROHAN,

"This is a bonnet. I hope you've got rid of the fluenzy by now. The D ledgers are in a muddle.

"Yours to command,

"BURLEIGH CLIFFORD."

In sheer gratitude, knowing what writing cost Sir Burleigh and the difficulty he had in constraining himself from considering illness hypocrisy, I got well on receipt of this mark of his esteem, and, putting it on my head, considered—with a parting shower of pearly tears, partly due to influenza, partly to weakness of mind—how long I could hope to retain his esteem, for how much longer the ledgers would be mine to command. No word had come from Stuart—

no token. It was easy work. I realised now that my imagined mastery of Sir Burleigh and M'Causland was slipping from me day by day. How kindly, how considerate, they had ever been to me! How well my one talent was repaid! And, pausing thus on the edge of the lake, foolish tears fell into it, to think how my hard service to that other, whom I had first met and counselled here, had realised the adage of the adder awakened to strike, to sting, and then to for ever glide away from me. That was the hardest. Ah! 'twas not the ingratitude but the dull, desolate vacancy—the abandonment! Half-fearing the allurements of the dark water over which I bent, I went swiftly on to the Hall, and, as ever, unannounced entered Sir Burleigh's study.

It was afternoon, and Sir Burleigh was dozing over his port wine and walnuts, and his gazette. He woke up with a start at my entrance, and, shaking himself back to consciousness, stared on me for a moment, then rose.

"Sit down, Helen Rohan."

He busied himself with unwonted care in shaking up the cushions of his own chair; and offered his hand to conduct me to it, as though I had been some great lady of the Court. After which he drew a hard and high-backed tapestry-

chair opposite mine, and again stared with a bewildered pity on me; whilst I—blaming not my folly, my weakness, my guilt, but the influenza—bent my head, and wept silently.

"I am sorry to see this, Helen." His tone was pitiful. "But you will be better soon, my dear."

He proffered his own glass of ruby port, though other glasses stood at hand. The refinements of courtesy gave way to the greater refinement of sympathy, as I had often noted in the children of the scattered hamlets saying to a comrade in distress, "Take a bite o' my apple," as though the mere fact of its belonging to a sympathiser conveyed a magic cure for grief.

Whether for its sympathy or its potency, the warm wine stilled the trembling of my hands and dried my tears, an immediate result triumphantly noted by Sir Burleigh, who, forcing the rest on me, said: "There! I'll christen that bin 'The Helen,' it's a good bin too; take the number off; but it's d——d seldom I hear a better name, Helen Rohan."

"You are very kind," I said, as I pushed the empty glass away, "but it wasn't the wine, Sir Burleigh."

"Never mind what it was," quoth Sir Bur-

leigh. "We must humour sick folk, Helen! Wait till you're well again."

"I am quite well," I respond defiantly; then another shower of tears blinds me, not to be stayed, this time, by threats, expostulations, entreaties—in all of which Sir Burleigh indulged after his first stupefied amaze at the relapse. Faster and faster the bitter, hopeless, helpless tears flowed on to my furred pelisse, as though to avenge all the calm, tearless years now gone, fled for ever!

Sir Burleigh at length, though with a terrible ruffled temper, gave over his efforts at consolation, and sipped his wine gloomily pondering what it might mean—into what distress, disgrace, or dilemma I had stumbled or been led; pondering with a bent brow and darkly flushed face. "Tell me," said he at length, "what this means! I will not be harsh to you! Has that old fool M'Causland been frightening you?"

"No!" said I, with a heartrending sob.

"Then he knows nothing of your distress, Helen, whatever it may chance to be?"

"I am in no distress," I strove to utter, but the words ran into each other in a prolonged moan of sound, inarticulate and dreadful, even to my own ears.

"My dear," said he, "this is too serious for

talking. "Rest a while and recover yourself. Nay," he continued, "I cannot see you suffer, nor will not," and, taking me into his kind arms, he soothed me into calm. "Now," said he, "you have but two tyrants, Helen. Yet would be better content with one. Is not that our best solution?"

"Do not plan for so unhappy a poor wretch!" I cried. "I deserve nothing!—nothing but scorn and cruelty! Nor will I resist them. Let them come in how bitter form they may, I deserve a thousandfold more!"

"Stuff! stuff!" said Sir Burleigh, "apportioning deserts is but lost time; you deserve nothing but solid comfort, Helen, and I will have no woman's face haunting me to my grave, especially yours. Say if you will have Burleigh Manor and Burleigh Clifford, my dear, and they are both yours. Come," he continued, "do not begin to weep again! You are weak and tired, rest awhile—and, whether it be yes or no for me, I am always your friend. Yes! by the Lord! let M'Causland but treat you thus again with his hell-fire preachments, I will make him realise a little of it here!"

Again there was a silence. At that moment the gratitude for years of kindness, the thankfulness for present sympathy, the consolations of his firm friendship, even the close clasp of his

strong arms, appealed irresistibly to my tired and weakened frame, to my worn and weary heart; and, on being again asked for my answer, I murmured : "Yes."

"Very well," said he, "'tis a wise decision, Helen, though I say it. You are no farm-wench, to stop and listen to sermons ; and a Clifford of my descent may, I hope, dispense with them too —or the devil's in it. You have always liked me a bit, Helen ?"

"Yes," said I truly enough, "always."

"As to Verney," he went on, "'twill not please him, of course ; yet he is your friend, Helen, and you can, besides, hold your own with him. To tell truth, I would not marry a fool, were she never so handsome ; yet that is what I heard Verney means doing — that pretty wench Molly Tremenheere, the General's daughter. I have written absolutely forbidding it, but I doubt he has the bit between his teeth. To forbid, is to bid us as a general thing, and you see it is so by this." He strode to a bureau, and brought out a Government despatch. "They warn me against Jacobites, but say no kind word of warning against the greater mischief — a wife. What the mischief are you laughing at ?"

"Nothing," I replied with lips that quivered anew.

"There!" Sir Burleigh threw me the despatch. "Read that, Helen, whilst I go and order my cob round. I must tell M'Causland, for we must be snug and settled before Verney comes back again. What d'ye say to Thursday? There's my chaplain at Letchford. Verney turned him out o' the Hall: so he's none friendly to him; an' he's in a livin' o' mine. Say Thursday. Verney's in London now, at the playhouses. He'll none hear of it by then, and will be finely forestalled."

Overwhelmed by dread, misery, and remorse, I was silent. Sir Burleigh, unnoting, banged the door after him on his way to the stables; and I stood confronting a haggard face, in a mirror, which, surmounted by an unfamiliar blue *toque*, yet seemed like my own.

"Thursday!" it mutters to me, "or a dread abyss *you* dare not face—homeless, an outcast, a pariah!"

Later, gliding like a ghost through the dazzle of the sunset, past the black lake, and into the farm-parlour with my arms full of heavy books, I threw myself, exhausted and dazed, into a seat, and said, on M'Causland's entrance, words I could scarce frame.

"I am to marry Sir Burleigh. You are to go and meet him now."

Waiting no second bidding, M'Causland, who had just ridden in from market, remounted and rode off to the Hall.

Was this what he hoped for by allowing me to lead a lady's life in his hardworking household, keeping me ever well before the Clifford vision, mixing me with their business, thus taking away the glaring incongruity it might otherwise have worn to the household and the hamlet? It was more than likely. I had thought myself the only schemer, the only dreamer, because of the caution and reticence with which M'Causland played his cards. Because of his skilful ruggedness, it did not follow that this result was entirely unforeseen—rather, I thought, pondering on the unusual haste he now showed, it had been with him a foregone conclusion.

Our blackest anticipations, like our brightest hopes, are seldom so garish, so lavish of their several colouring, as fancy before or after would bid us believe.

That M'Causland should rule that we should be married in a church, was to be expected, and the consequent delay of a week whilst a messenger rode post-haste to the Bishop of our Diocese for a licence, was also a fret, not less to me than to Sir Burleigh; for the week following was to witness Verney Clifford's return. But

the licence came duly to hand, and, the wonder of the hamlets being merged into anticipations of a feast of beef and puddings, a dance and a bonfire, the rustic impatience was even greater than our own.

Sir Burleigh had stipulated, with many an oath, that M'Causland was to keep them well away from the Manor, or it would be the worse for them ; and the revellers, with an intuitive, perception of the same, made all their preparations for rejoicing at the farm.

M'Causland, who as well as his master would fain have dispensed with the said revelling, yet constrained himself, sorely against his will, to liberality, so that, being married to Sir Burleigh as it were with bell, book, and candle, Verney Clifford could not, after, seek to disprove it.

"That's a' why, Helen," he said, grimly, as I mounted the gig beside him, and took from old Elsie a huge bunch of daffodils and wallflowers. Whilst Elizabeth, coming from the midst of her cooking of the wedding-feast, courtesied, and like some culinary gipsy, called me "My lady," *en avant*, as she tucked my white dress into the apron of the gig, returning my nod and smile as I drove off thoughtfully, smelling at the wallflowers—in a dream, but not of happiness: that was for ever gone.

Sir Burleigh came spurring up to the church on the vicious roan cob, and looked darkly and dourly at the small crowd at the church-gates, as though he said aloud:

"What is the need of your presence at any arrangements made by your betters?" But he thawed somewhat on seeing, as I alighted, that I had on, amidst all the whiteness of the wedding finery, the blue Jacobite bonnet—his own present.

* * * * * * *

It was over! I had sworn truly or falsely, as circumstances should shape themselves. On our return, we changed the form of the procession, so far as that Sir Burleigh sat beside me in the gig, and, driving to the Farm, waited whilst I changed my dress, to return with him to the Manor. I went up into my room. The window was open, and the warm April air flowed in with light and sunshine, and the loud song of the lark from without. It was in its usual trim order—wide, spacious, and exquisitely-kept. Nothing was packed, nothing disturbed. One of the Persian rugs, which came originally from the Hall, was a trifle awry, and, stooping to straighten it, something hard in the fringe met my fingers. It was the ring Stuart had flung to me in his jealous rage of Blount's name. I

took it to the window to examine. It was full of diamonds, that is to say a great cluster of them crowded together, as though riches, rather than art, guided its owner. It was a beautiful ring for all that, and I wrapped it in a silk kerchief and put it in my pocket, resolving to restore it if possible. I closed the window, though loth to shut out the sun; but Elizabeth would doubtless forget it at night, and I had no mind to leave my nest desolate and damp.

I did not linger, for painful memories are light sleepers—and many slept in that room. Descending the stairs, I was surveyed by Sir Burleigh and M'Causland, as though I were some new creature fresh from Paradise.

"Eh, but she's bonny!" said M'Causland, giving his goods commendation.

"She is so!" said Sir Burleigh, emphatically, "and not an inch of her stupid. That is our training M'Causland."

I laughed at this unqualified praise, and, Sir Burleigh's cob being brought round, I, in my old furred pelisse, besought him that I might lead it to the park.

"Got us both by the bridle, eh?" said Sir Burleigh, as we went through the large handsome gateway of the domain now my own. "My own!" thought I but without much exultation.

I loved Sir Burleigh better than the Manor. Sir Burleigh once within his own gates breathed more freely, but grew more grim and ogre-like in his demeanour when, on nearing the Hall, he saw the dancing light of a fire in his study and two forms outlined by it againt the window.

"Verney Clifford!" he said grimly. "It is coming, Helen. Don't you interfere: let him say his say—for the best and the worst o' Verney is that he *will* say his say, let what may come of it. By George, if he bottled up all the poison in him, there'd be an explosion to be heard at Letchford. So ne'er ye mind, Helen Rohan, let him say what suits him, we shall soon shake down and be quiet."

But Sir Burleigh shook in his shoes as he alighted from the cob, and seemed as though ten years had elapsed since he mounted at the farm.

Yet by a strong effort he managed to recollect that as yet he was master of the place, and, taking my hand, led me in. The old place looked strange to me—its calm peace a haven to my storm-tossed mind.

There were no friends or retinue to receive us. The cobwebs draperied the bare oaken rafters, the wide staircase had in its corners little heaps of dust and fluff, and the oak panel-

ling was dim and unpolished where the deer's heads with branching antlers and the stiff gold bannerets worked by former ladies of the house hung. On the mat at the door of the study the mastiff lay, a grim guard. He rose up and yawned and shook himself as Sir Burleigh laid his hand on the door-handle and opened it, glancing at the two persons on the hearth—none other than Milord and Miss Fernie Tremenheere. Sir Burleigh stopped short, and, with a gasp of rage and wrath, exclaimed:

"By ——! then you've dared to go and marry her? Against my wishes—against your own interests—a beggar-woman!"

"I hardly see how that can interest Helen Rohan!" said Milord, palely, indicating me as I came in—the one tranquil, unembarrassed spectator of their mutual explanations.

"Ne'er you mind about her!" Sir Burleigh quite forgot his own misdeeds—lost sight of them as completely as though they had no existence—and stamped, first one foot and then the other, in a frenzy of wrath.

"Are you so mad, Verney Clifford—so mad as to think I'll have a woman here?"

Forgetting my promise of non-intervention, I laid my hand lightly on his arm, and, lest my name should be mired by milord, said:

"You are married too, Sir Burleigh!"

As a tidal-wave which has broken in surf and thunder on a rugged beach retreats with a low murmur to its parent sea, so Sir Burleigh, all his old guiltiness reviving, said, mildly:

"Eh, Helen Rohan, you might have held your tongue!"

Then ensued a pause, broke by a light sarcastic laugh from Verney, who strode to the buffet; and, pouring out a glass of wine, brought it to Miss Tremenheere, who was sitting with chattering teeth and affrighted eyes on the edge of a chair. He did not say a word, but Sir Burleigh, seeming to feel himself vanquished, went from the study, and left to me the pleasant task of explanation.

"I am married to Sir Burleigh." I chose Lady Clifford, who was helpless, as the recipient of this modest avowal, crossing to her and resting my hand on her shoulder.

"Let me alone!" — carefully studying the expression of her lord's face. She writhed herself free of me, and said:

"So this is the end of your manœuvring, madam? If you are married to him, as you say, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, trying to trick milord out of the Manor."

"Believe me,"—I rested both hands on her

shoulders, and half-turned her face to me, holding her perforce in that position—"it will be better for you both to weigh your words now, lest I use the power my position here gives me."

"As abusing it."

"True!" said Verney, amiably. "Since we are all in the same boat, we had better try plain-sailing." Then, as a philosophic commentary, he ran over a list of foul words, to which he appended my name—Fernie's hair standing on end, as she looked from one to the other, as though expecting the roof of the room to be lifted and sail slowly away. Try as I might to be angry, I could not—(Verney's wrath always amused me)—forbear a smile as I listened, absently smoothing Fernie's alarmed silken hair. Then, taking her hand, I whispered:

"Shall we go upstairs?"

To which, with a stunned, half-stupefied expression, she assented, glad to escape this tempest of words and wrath. There were some state bedrooms in tolerable outward order at Burleigh Manor—rooms where kings and queens had of old slept—*quasi* historical temples of Somnus—possibly of majestic snoring also. But the beds had long since been removed to storerooms, and wooden pillows and bolsters

underlay the silk counterpanes. I nearly broke my head—forgetting this for the moment, as I threw myself on the wooden couch in one of these abodes; and Fernie, dolefully bolting the door, rubbed a rusty steel-mirror with her lace handkerchief, and gazed in silence at her pale face.

"No water here!" She voyaged round the room, looking into the Dresden-china basins and ewers. "But what lovely old china! Come and look, Helen Rohan!"

"It is all an old story to me," I replied. "I'd rather lie here and wonder how the kings and queens managed their ears o' nights. I've crushed one of mine."

"Feathers cake if they're not well shaken." Fernie left off admiring the china, and, coming forward like a zealous chambermaid, took to thumping the supposed pillows, with dreadful effect to her knuckles. "Why, they are wood!" she exclaimed, in a most doleful voice, adding: "You don't seem to mind. May I lie down?"

"If there's room," I said, not moving.

"Acres!" Fernie climbed cautiously into the wooden framework, and, instead of letting me enjoy the blissful rest I had promised myself, began with many tears to tell me of her woes and sorrows, which, according to her, had

culminated in her marriage with Verney Clifford.

"Then why did you marry him?" I asked wearily. "You knew what he was, and what you might expect. Just as surely as, before you rested on it, you knew this bed was wood, for all its fine silk counterpane with gold blazonry on it."

"Why shouldn't I marry him?" she said sullenly, drying her tears. "Blount was just as wooden, and had——"

"No counterpane," I suggested, at which she laughed, whispering in rather an awe-struck voice, lest she might be overheard.

"I'am right glad you're here! I was horrid frightened of Sir Burleigh, he seems such a strange old man! Verney said he hated women. I thought if I humoured him I might manage to stay, but if you was not here I'd cut my throat sooner than be boxed up with the two of them!"

"Very well," I rejoined, rather amused with her fear of the Cliffords, as I might have been amused with a stranger's fear of the mastiff. "I'll put away all the razors, when I go out, for fear."

"Don't laugh!" she said, "I want to be friends with you."

"Very well," I agreed, crushing the other ear by turning away from her, "I am your friend, so far as it is possible."

"Now you are Verney's aunt, we are both miladies. 'Twas partly for that I listened to his suit at all. It is not so lovely being milady, is it?"

I threw one arm over the wood, and raised my half-bruised face. "The farm pillows were of down thrice driven, for Elsie is a notable housewife, and the linen there is lavendered."

"Ah, well!" said Fernie, returning to the mirror, "one can't have everything! And, if one sleeps with kings and queens, one must put up with wood, instead of thrice-drove down! Look at my pocket-kerchief!—it is all over rust! I pray God some of it is rubbed off Verney and Sir Burleigh!"

And I suggested, rising reluctantly: "Let us go down to the study and see!"

"Having made d——d fools of ourselves, I suppose we must make the best of it!" were the words that came out to meet the echo of our footsteps in the hall, and, unlike the philosophy of his nephew, Sir Burleigh's stood the test of our entrance. He even gazed at us with a sort of grim satisfaction—at my erect, bronze, beruffled head and pale face, and Fernie's full red

lips and downcast eyes, as, equally afraid of her husband and his uncle, she kept close to me. Sir Burleigh, buried in his gazette, took no notice of her, but asked me civilly to go to the kitchen and order the dinner, which I did. The kitchen-stairs, winding down like those of a dungeon, were in black darkness, and as I, cautiously clinging to the wall, made my way down, the hot breath of the mastiff which followed me on my neck, I saw no reason to hope that we should share in the beef and pudding that was otherwhere being consumed to celebrate our wedding.

"Eh, Helen Rohan! has it come to this?" stumbling over Janet, who was seated on the lowest step, in wrath at her empire being over.

"Even so, Janet," I said, mildly, "but not to your hurt. So get up."

"No!" She rose sullenly. "You'll be after ordering me about an' about after all your silk speeches, an' if it please ye'se," said Janet.

"It is more than likely," I said, "that whatever silk overlies my speeches must in future be wove from humility and obedience supplied by you, sweetheart. So let us have dinner at once, and light me into the larder."

Janet obeyed, muttering; and, thrusting a

candle into the fire, followed me with the guttering tallow in her bare hand.

"It looks nice!" I remarked, ogrishly, seeing a raw, newly-slaughtered sheep hung up by the heels, and a large array of poultry. We will have cutlets and kidney-soup, Janet; for roast, a turkey; and stewed carp—stewed in claret, mind, with cloves."

"Lord save us!" grinned Janet, thawing. "I'll be having a scullion here soon, an' fine doings. I said, when I heard of it,"—Janet jerked her thumb due north to indicate the marriage—"when I heard of it, I said: 'The first thing to change in a married housen's the kitchen.' An', if it was the Lord's will, there's worse than you, Helen Rohan!—Milady, I mean. Eh! my Lord, here's another!"

It was Fernie, whose appearance caused Janet to drop the tallow-candle, which I rescued, still alight, from a sputtering splash on the floor.

"What a dreadful raw sheep!" said Fernie, briskly. "And a kitchen like the Cannibal Islands! Oh, heavens! look at the dog!"

Beech was licking with relish the blood from the sheep's head. "Gar ye off!" Janet gave Beech a hearty cuff, which he retorted by springing upon her and knocking her down. After

this exchange of amenities, she exclaimed testily:

"If ye go, I'll cook; but if I'm to be a fightin' Beech all the time, it's like ye'll go to bed hungry an angry."

"Be quick then!" said Fernie. "I never saw such a place—sluts and drones, and saucy insolent fellows and wenches!" and, escaping up the stairs vainly trying to entice Beech with her, she left us alone in the Cyclopean kitchen.

Poor Janet, in whom loneliness and hard work had induced a morbid sort of misanthropy, whispered appalled:

"Is she Verney Clifford's wife? God help us!—the Manor be full of rats now!"

And then, lifting down the sheep, she chopped and sawed and trimmed, casting lumps of flesh and fat to Beech, enough to make him bilious. I leaned against the wide fireplace, watching her—a strange intense loathing of life seizing me as I saw Beech gorge and glut on the flesh cast to him, as a worshipper of the world's good things will, with equal zest and unconsciousness of remark, seize on success.

I thought of the dog's master, Clifford, who in spite of the opposition of his uncle, perhaps because of it—in spite of the wrong to Colonel

Blount, with whom he had been long on terms of such intimacy as exists between those whose creed is intense self and disregard of all moral obligations — had taken Blount's one ewe-lamb, Fernie Tremenheere, to wife, and exultantly carried her off as a treasure, because Blount, who cared no whit for any other human being, cared with all his soul for his General's daughter.

Meditating on this, I was awoke by the odour of the cutlets, the savoury steam of the kidney soup. I went upstairs with my hand on Beech's collar and returned to the study.

Fernie assisted with zeal in clearing and preparing the table for dinner, eyed by Sir Burleigh, who to me, as I passed and repassed, kept up a running commentary on her proceedings.

"Stuffs the gazette under a cushion! eh, Helen Rohan?—that's barrack manners; puts the wine-glasses in the window-seat to be sat on. There's a nice wife for a man to have!"

"Good enough for Verney!" I whispered, at which he laughed—and, at every fresh *gaucherie* of the bride's, repeated with zest.

"Good enough for Verney? Yes—and a D sight too good! He's no right with a wife at all, especially Blount's."

After a good dinner, the asperities of temper of Verney and his uncle seemed somewhat to

soften, and Fernie, proposing cards in a somewhat frightened tone, was relieved to find the suggestion obligingly received; so we sat down to whist, changing life-partners to ones for the evening. We were all good players; so the luck ran equal. We had half-guinea points, and, but for a moment's absence of mind when my partner chanced to name my two spade-guineas, should not have given our adversaries occasion to rejoice over us. As it was, after all, Sir Burleigh and Verney's wife remained winners, but we were all content it should be so, as anything is welcomer than discord. It was midnight when they took leave of us for the night—Verney taking occasion to kiss me as an aunt; and Fernie, as she said, for old acquaintance and new kinship's sake. How they were lodged, I know not; but Verney had doubtless made his own arrangements, knowing the house and its resources, and, in truth, no thought that it was a bride's homecoming troubled me. I gave no thought to it, nor that I was a bride—everything seemed swallowed up in a thick mist—black, clinging, contaminating. Had I truly betrayed my old friend and kind master? A she-Judas—for the Manor! Were it not well I should go out, and, after confessing my repentance, let my life fly back to its source, to be forgiven or punished as

God willed? Yet how could I? In what words could I frame, to the proud man opposite, that he had descended in his choice, only to be made a screen and cover for my sins? Sir Burleigh was regarding me curiously—he had given over trifling with the cards, and now snuffed the long-wicked candles, that, like clocks, pointed to the lapse of time. For my life, I dared not speak; and still he looked and waited. Seeing, I suppose, that I, too, waited, he at length spoke.

"It is getting late, Helen!"

"Is it?" I said, stupidly and hopelessly, and then, as the rapid beating of my heart stopped further speech, I drew off and returned to him the marriage-ring.

"Why, Helen!" he said, "divorcing me already? Nay, you must prove cruelty, my dear!" and, approaching me as I stood froze with horror of myself on the hearth, he took me in his arms and kissed me tenderly.

I have spoken before of the power of sympathy —Sir Burleigh's did me all the good in the world. Nay, would Judas have hanged himself had even one of the priests his employers shown pity on him when he repented? I trow not; but none did, so we cannot tell: while I, worse than Judas, had these kind, strong arms

about me, but for which my heart would have burst with grief, and shame, and remorse.

He would not suffer me to speak—no, not a word; but said, as he had gout, I should sleep in the state-rooms, and wake up to see myself looked on by my favourite pictures. Then, taking my hand and each bearing a candle, we went thither along the corridor, and he left me at the door of the long suite of rooms, and went away alone, with a sigh that it nigh broke my heart to hear. As I have said, strong mental anguish had on me an opiate effect, and I slept and dreamed of the "spirits of just men made perfect," and, from a cloudy vision of such, seemed to see the stern face of Sir Burleigh, beautified by love and pity. Also that I loved him now, and hated the Stuart: I dreamed that too.

As the lady who, being forced by her ambitious friends to marry Bluebeard, discovered, ere the honeymoon had waned, that his beard "was not so very blue," so I—as day by day Sir Burleigh grew more and more indulgent to me, and ever lessened and lightened my grief and woe by his kindness—found the truth of Solomon's saying that one travelling alone if he fall hath not so great a chance of recovery as he that hath a companion. My desire for open

confession passed away. I was no Papist to try and clear my soul of sin by confessing to man. Most humbly I asked God for pardon and guidance, for His mercy who cleansed the leper—and was not I such in His sight? I looked not to my own deserts, but to His mercy, and mercy I got."

So, to Sir Burleigh's relief, we had no more differences or divergences:—only sometimes, in the purple spring-twilights, my graceless heart would cry out for more—more than all this calm, more than all this mercy, for hell itself so Stuart were there and I might be near to him!

When these acute agony-fits came on, I would wander away, like the possessed of old-time, into the wildest recesses of the park—would walk and stamp and rave aloud to the silent trees and listening sheep—would accuse the infinite mercy of boundless cruelty and tyranny in keeping my sweet poison from me, and then return and sleep away, in my husband's arms, the exhaustion of passion and despair.

The "fluenzy" was called upon by Sir Burleigh to account for my pale face and sad eyes. And, as so often happens in life, I, who as Helen Rohan was supposed to possess a constitution of iron and adamantine nerves, was now, in virtue of my promotion, held to be a fragile creature

whose existence was a miracle. As the weeks went on, even M'Causland became indoctrinated with this absurdity, and, on my wandering over bonnetless one day to the Farm, received me, to my surprise with warning, uplifted hands, exclaiming:

"It's weel for ye, Helen, to hae a thochtfu' sensible mon to husban' ye, or the dews an' the rains, instead of faain' on yer braw silk head, wad be greenin' the grass o' yer buryin'-place."

"Eh!" I say impatiently, "all that is bad enough in Sir Burleigh! I am tough as windle-strae! Why do ye think otherwise?"

"Otherwise?" said M'Causland, "an' ye like a tall white candle wastin' awa' to ae mon's sight! It'll do Verney Clifford's heart gude to see ye stretchit—an' his own witch-wife Lady o' the Manor."

"She is not much witch-like," I said languidly, even this small contention tiring me; "come and see her, uncle. My successor, she is a bonnie-looking creature full of health and happiness."

"I'll e'en keep whare God pit me," said M'Causland, "I wish her nae ill, but all health, wealth, an' prospairity—but I like my ain best Helen, an' there's Scripture to that."

"There's Scripture to everything," I mutter

mutinously—adding, as he looks stern, "everything that is good."

"There's Scripture to witches and warlocks," he said, looking at me anxiously. "An' proof they can make a wax-image o' an enemy, an' roast it till it and they pine and perish together."

"Verney hasn't patience to that!" I laugh. "He would stuff it bodily into the fire, and then come and rate the enemy for not dying right away."

"Don't you believe it," said M'Causland, "he knaweth to wait like ilk ither bad man, an' ye behove, now you are in his path, to be vera carefu', Helen. Verney rough is bad, but Verney smooth—no snake is subtiller."

"Is he smooth to ye now?" I asked.

"Ay, he is so," said M'Causland. "He wants ready money, an's on for me to a'vise anew the sale of Denzil's outlyin' farm. The lease has just faa'n in, and Denzil's for buyin' it for six thousand punds sterlin'."

"Advise Sir Burleigh, then, to sell it," I exclaimed.

"Ye thriftless loon!" said M'Causland in indignation. "Nae sooner to get him, honest man, into your clutches, but take to gamblin'."

"It's gambling, to a surety," I said, "and for

myself too, listen uncle. Why should I not have some sure hold on things? Consider, if Sir Burleigh, an' he's like enough to, lost all for the Jacobites. How would Verney treat me or you, d'ye think?"

"I don't need thinkin'," he said. "It's short speed an' lang rope to both frae Verney Clifford."

"Then we must have a sinking-fund," I said earnestly. "Could I—could Sir Burleigh go a begging in France? It's little I care for myself, but had the Stuart been found here, where would Sir Burleigh be now, for all your stewardship?"

Then, as he listened in amaze, I unfolded to him a plan, which was—through an agent to purchase a small estate in France whither, if troublous times came, we could retire. M'Causland, who though cautious was farseeing, seemed struck by the reasonableness of the plan viewed in the light of late events, and promised to think it over.

"It is not for myself," I said, recrossing the park on my homeward way. "Not for me, for I shall die; but for Sir Burleigh. He shall not die in a ditch, let him be never so rash in his allegiance—and he will risk all for the Stuarts."

A few days afterwards I met Sir Burleigh riding homeward as I was wandering in the

park; he stopped, dismounting, and faced me something sternly.

"Was it your wish," he said in a harsh tone, "that Denzil's farm should be sold?"

"Yes," I said, surprised at my uncle having told him without apprising me that he meant to do so.

"Then it is sold."

"I am glad of it, Sir Burleigh."

"Don't 'Sir Burleigh' me, you d——d mercenary witch!" he said, his lips twitching with passion. "Take the price of it, covetous devil that you are! What! you resented that no settlements were made on you like the highest lady in the land? I gave you everything, but 'twas not enough. You might, as 'tis said, 'coin me into gold,' but your dignity was ruffled."

His temper was, and I could see that he was hurt beside: evidently M'Causland had not told him the whole, for which I felt thankful. I listened to him with downward eyes, into which the slow tears were stealing. I would have been glad to lie dead at his feet, had that convinced him that the wretched money had no slightest attraction for me, far less any thought of my own dignity or plan for myself. "You are cruel," I said chokingly, and could say no more.

"Cruel! am I?" his indignation deepened. "How, madam? In what way?"

"It was not for myself," I said hotly. "What there is left of me the worms can have!" I held up my two thin hands in appeal, "and the sooner the better for me!"

"Who was it for, then?"

"For you!" I cried, and then, full of indignation at M'Causland's betrayal in part, I told him the whole of the scheme.

"Thank you! I don't want women-folk to counsel me in business!" he said, still offended, but relenting. "Ye meant well, Helen!"

"Don't come with me," I said bitterly, as he turned the cob. "I've got no friends now but the wild creatures in the forest! I wish I was a ghost, and then even they could not gape and stare upon me!" So he rode home in anger, and I roamed about, seeking sweet peace, but finding more often despair.

* * * * * *

On my return, some hours after, I found Sir Burleigh on the steps, bareheaded, looking anxiously abroad for my approach, at which I smiled. "Truly you have a heart of gold," I said, embracing him, "to forgive such a peevish wretch!"

"Look at those two fools!" said Verney to

his wife, as they sat in an embrasure of the terrace-wall.

Fernie laughed gaily. "Well we are just as bad!"

"No fear!" said Milord. "You don't love me for money, eh?"

"For what else, pray?" quoth Fernie, with pretty impertinence.

* * * * * *

"Don't you ever feel the want of any clothes?" said Fernie to me one morning as we paced the terrace. "I don't, of course, mean covering," she continued, "but as Lady of the Manor you ought to be in stiff silk. And, between ourselves, I would sooner cut up the silk counterpanes of the state-rooms, than wear camlet!" She touched my blue dress.

"I don't mind," I said, indifferently; "and besides, I am not a beauty as you are."

"Not so much," she said candidly, "but sufficient so to improve with dress. Verney's given me a bank-bill to spend at a milliner's, and will take me to London when he can get his uncle to give him some money—to spend it. If yours will give you some, I'll bring back the newest modes for you."

"Eh!" I said, "it will be a chance! I'll go

ask for some." I did not truly want it, but wished to get away from her.

"Some money," I stammered, when fairly in the study, where Verney was also, "to spend in dress!" I was embarrassed at his keen gaze and smile.

"How much?" said Sir Burleigh, who was something near. "Will fifty guineas content you?"

"Yes," I said, taking them, feeling sure there would have been haggling but for Verney.

"Here," I said, rejoining Fernie, "I want a gold-coloured brocade sacque—that I must have; also some dimity morning-gowns and high red-heeled slippers, and a large fan."

"It is well to be you!" said Fernie, surveying the bank-bill for fifty guineas with disquiet (hers was but for twenty). Then we went on, and I, profiting none by it, heard all the latest modes discussed — the paint, powder, and patches—until, looking at her peachy face and brown eyes, I marvelled so fair a creature could so mar God's gifts to her.

"Yet," thought I sadly, "is not one's soul lovelier than all—and in *his* sight always? and do we not mar and befoul it with grievous sins? I was thinking thus when steps of a horse on the turf caused us both to turn. A gentleman,

well-dressed and in a tie-wig, young and well-looking, rode up, and, without in any way saluting us, stayed his horse and called out distinctly for Lord Clifford. Clifford, who must have seen him from the window, came down the steps to the terrace—limping slightly, for his leg was yet not strong.

"I have Colonel Blount's order to place this in your hands, and to say in his name that, if you answer it not at once in person, you are a villain and a coward, and shall be proclaimed as such everywhere." Then he bowed low to us and rode off.

"A challenge!" said Verney, testily, to his wife's entreaties to be told. "From Tyrone!" he added carelessly. Fernie turned pale. "Go inside!" he said to her harshly; then as she obeyed he took my hand. "Come a turn with me, Helen," he said. "This challenge, though I expected it, has come at a curséd time. I have not a stiver."

"Must you go?" I said. "You have already hurt the man enough. Decline it: he will be going to France soon."

"I would follow him to hell," said Verney, "sooner than be posted; you know nothing of such things. How should you—brought up in a mouldy farm with humble poor wretches?"

"True," I said, "we did not use the borrower's brush to keep our coats sleek. Is that your meaning?" He was eyeing the bank-bill.

"Don't refuse me!" he cried humbly enough, "I will repay you on my return."

"Say you've sent for a new sacque—say it's in a teapot up the chimney. What the devil!—need I invent excuses for you? Give him a kiss. I will say for you, you keep your men well in hand. Blount used to swear by you. Come, we were friends, Helen; you wont see me posted, I know."

"Take it!" I said, with some disgust, knowing he would have it, and, desirous of sparing myself the humiliation of his further asking, which seemed none to him. He took it with scant thanks, and, saying he should leave Fernie in my care, went to make preparations for his departure, and console his wife, whom I heard weeping.

So milord went; and his wife, who absolutely refused to stay behind, was to be left at a friend's halfway on the road, for a fortnight; for Verney promised himself—the thing well over and Blount wounded, for so he counted on it to fall out—to send for her to town for a short time.

Fifty guineas would, I knew, not go far to his expenses, and I was soon satisfied on that head.

Sir Burleigh had sold Denzil's farm, and given Verney a few hundreds of the money. This, at a time when he was sore pressed, would have reconciled milord to any sale—to any sacrifice; though after—for he was tentative in his wickedness—he would return on his present thanks and dig it up as a grudge, like a dog with a buried bone.

I went with them to the park-gates, Fernie reproaching me all the way in that, as she said, I would not trust her with my bank-bill. Verney affected not to hear our discourse, but was chuckling. He dismounted at the park-gates and kissed my hand as Lady of the Manor, promising not to hurt Blount overmuch for my sake. I saw Fernie's red lip quiver as he spoke thus, and said I:

"Doubtless Colonel Blount will kill you, Verney, as you deserve, for talking of his wrongs and grief so lightly."

"Wrongs and grief!" quoth Milord mockingly. "I little thought to hear you his apologist—who flogged your cousin at an idle word of mine."

"That is not the present question," I said, coldly, "and of that I have but your word. The Sergeant told me it was a breach of discipline. It is now past—forgot."

"And you believe the Sergeant?"

"Why do you wrangle?" said Fernie. "Blount made it up with M'Causland after. He hath a noble heart, and is liked by all the regiment."

"Look! if she be not ready—me killed—to take to him again!" laughed Milord. "Well, farewell, sweet aunt! We will be back ere long."

"Good-bye," said Fernie, "though you don't trust me." She kissed her hand, and they cantered off—their men having gone before with the valises.

Two months rolled away, and Verney had not returned. Their passing made but little difference in our outward life; the deep heart of summer shed living warmth and luminous beauty over the land. I was grown used to my changed life, but withal hushed and still, like the pictures that were my chief companions indoors. Sir Burleigh, still zealous and untired in his affection, still approved of a woman staying at home, nor cared to sanction my going with him about the estate. He had, he said, M'Causland for factor, so why should I be fatigued?—so, for want of occupation, I grew listless and melancholy, incurring the reprobation of Janet, who observed that, since there had been a ready-writer in the house, her Dick got no letters, no

not so much as a scratch of the pen, and demanded to know if I, with a cook in the house, would like to go constantly dinnerless. As I never flew into a fury with anyone for defective analogy or eristic logic, I begged her pardon and proposed writing at once. Then said Janet, with tears in her eyes, as she led the way down to the kitchen, whither I followed scribe-like with pen and inkhorn:

"I wouldn't believe any harm of you, Helen Rohan, if an angel from heaven came and told me, for you are good to the poor and the unlearned, and the same to high and low; if I wanted justice I would come to you nought afraid."

"Not mercy, Janet?" I asked abstractedly dipping my pen in ink and preparing to begin. Janet did not reply to this query, but looked a strong negative, and plunged into her long and homely tale to Dick. I shuddered as I set it down word for word—so faithful, so unflattered a portraiture did this dweller in subterranean gloom give of the lives and actions of the people around her. Like some oracle, Janet forgot herself in her subject. I had to describe myself minutely, and to assure Dick that there were worse people in the world. This I doubted, but dared not interrupt the flow of revelation.

Janet was honestly oblivious of my agency. She was in spirit writing it all herself, to her only and absent son, and thought no more of her sentient pen than I of the goose-quill I handled.

At length it was finished—that poor little record of life, undiluted truth, and faithful portrayal of feelings. I sealed and addressed it, dropping, by Janet's directions, many red-wax kisses on the cover—and then, when she herself had given it a hearty kiss, I took it upstairs for Sir Burleigh's frank, and left her happy and content.

Going on to the terrace, I leaned from an embrasure over the crumbling stonework of the balustrade, and looked down into the deep sunny turf. Old park turf is always lovely, so many small undistinguished flowers live in it—whole families together, queened over by the sweet wild-thyme and slender harebell. I wondered what the histories and rank of the lesser flowers might be, and presently, descending, plucked a handful, which, coming back, I arranged on the wall, in order of precedence regulated not by outward show but by minuteness of finish. This was a hard task and required pondering: why not put the largest and brightest first? Nay!—but so the world does; and had I not been called just, an

Aristides? Yet Aristides suffered death; so the bluebell, for its beauty, should temper the too strict order.

In the midst of my problem, up comes Sir Burleigh, with a friend; and down go, with a sweep, the whole row from first to last.

"Come in," says Sir Burleigh, not stopping, but going straight on to the study.

Following in some amaze, I find myself in presence of a stranger.

"Dame Helen Clifford," said Sir Burleigh, giving me what sounded an unreal name. "Lord Kilmarnock—our Prince's friend."

Kilmarnock kisses my hand with one knee halfway to the ground, and congratulates Sir Burleigh on his marriage pleasantly. Nor does his pleasantness diminish at all over the wine and political talk which fill in the afternoon, while I, knitting in the window, which is closed, feel stifling for a breath of air.

Presently Sir Burleigh takes him to his room, the only spare room in order for a guest; and then we dine in the small dining-room, where dark Titian faces look down on us from the walls.

"'Dame Helen Clifford.' Why is it," I ask, "promoted folk are so egotistic?" I am conscious of a melancholy that Titian could have em-

bodied, so perfect is it; but I talk to Kilmarnock as much as doth my husband, and appear as much at interest in their plans, and far better in geography than he is. For he thinks Leith to be inland, whereas it is a port. We have a fine salmon from Scotland, and other things, and afterwards early strawberries; then, in the moonlight, go on to the terrace, where Sir Burleigh smokes and bids us not mind him, but walk about, which we do. Kilmarnock is a Scotchman, and therefore cautious. He is yet more a Highlandman: witness the impetuosity of a speech beginning, "I am charged by—"

"Lord Kilmarnock forgets," I say gently, "that, though Sir Burleigh and I are one, we are not indivisible. Let him hear your charge, sir."

Sir Burleigh, his pipe finished, goes in, waving us back; he is going to doze preparatory to a long evening—wine with cards.

We reach the end of the long terrace, and Kilmarnock faces round upon me like an assassin—but who can strike air? I glide on, waiting for him to rejoin me.

"How sweet is the moonlight!" he said at length. And indeed it was still and holy as heaven, lying like sheeted silver on the great trees. I looked at it, longing to be absorbed into it, to be part of the great peace, something

distinct and away from humanity—existent, sentient, yet calm, silent, and at rest; not a fretting atom of earth, but a part of some grand quiet whole free from haunting memories of past agony.

"You look like some beautiful dream!" said Kilmarnock.

"Now," said I, "you speak less like an ambassador!" He smiled.

"Have you, then, any objection, ethical or other, to ambassadors?" And I replied:

"They should only be accredited to sovereign princes, not to vassals who have no power to treat with them. Pardon me, milord, if I wish you good-night. Though not a dream, I am asleep." And, not disturbing Sir Burleigh, I left the guest in the study and retired for the night.

* * * * * *

KILMARNOCK TO STUART.

"SIR,—When accredited by you to B. C. I feared lest his having so recently been cautioned should have slacked his zeal, and looked to have to use much persuasion. I do not find this to be the case. I pressed our resolution earnestly upon him. While agreeing to the main points, he hung back on a few—the most inconsiderable—one being S. Fraser's presence here,

and being doubtful if it were safe for you, after what has occurred. He loyally and warmly assured me of your welcome, then put one obstacle after another to me why you were safest away.

"Truly, my dear Lord, might I speak my mind, he is right:—the risk is unnecessary. All that transpires of importance can be communicated to you at Leith by our usual couriers, and your views to us in the same way. The miracle of your escape may not repeat itself. The agent is here as Dame Clifford, a beautiful woman devoted to her husband. I was not suffered to revive memories of our one past meeting, and one might as soon shake the self-possession of a queen. In that would be no danger. She seems happy and joyous enough. Sir B., 'tis evident, lives but in her content: he insisted on calling her to our council, a point which, knowing all, I could not contest. She listened intelligently, though with only a civil interest as to her husband's friend; yet her thoughts did not stray from the subject in hand, and her remarks, though few, suggested acuteness of mind, and a grasp of the matter discussed unusual in a woman. Our talk over and she retiring, Sir Burleigh's eyes followed her, and seeing he was willing

she should be praised, I congratulated him on her beauty and her evident talent. 'Of that,' said he, meaning talent, 'she has no lack. She has been somewhat rigidly kept to business all her life, but her beauty has sadly fallen off. She will take no care of herself, and, guard as I may, I often fear for her very life.' This I put down to mere uxoriousness, till he went on: 'A few months back, she had a severe illness, since which a listlessness possesseth her. Before, she was a bright-spirited wench 'twould have done your heart good to see; now she is a melancholy woman, though always kind and gentle as you see her. The cause I cannot guess.' Sir, can you?

"If so, in the interest of our cause, I forewarn you with all my heart avoid being here. To risk B. C. is to put away a certain yearly sum of large amount, and alienate, besides, several whom he greatly influences. Beautiful women are plentiful as berries—adherents like him rather scarcer than Phœnix, at the present. You wished me to possess you with the whole truth: it is writ here. To come, is certain danger, on that account.

"Now, leaving this, we have agreed to hold a caucus-meeting, the whereabouts to be fixed by you, to which B. C. will come alone, even if it

be to Scotland. The sooner it is fixed the better, as one is away who is better absent, and his movements watched. Himself, being fed with money from a presumed gull, will not cease to batten at the playhouses and hells till said gull be stripped, which will be when his absence is no longer of moment to us.

"Now, my dear Lord, if after what I have hinted you still feel secure and aim to come hither yourself, let me beseech you as friend to friend waive what is past, in that you will have a ready ally; neither need you fear embarrassment or unkindness—she is passionless as the Sphinx. As calm, order, and peace follow and attend her every movement, look, and tone—passion, if ever it existed, is quenched. You will, I trust, come with an unbiassed mind in that regard, remembering how deeply important to us is B. C.'s adherence, and how light a cause may forfeit it to us.

"I am, my dear Lord,

"Your devoted friend and servant,

"SERGIUS."

STUART TO KILMARNOCK.

"SERGIUS, greeting,—Your resolution for a caucus is acceptable. I will come to the

Manor. Neither need you fear for me in the regard you have been at such moral pains to set forth. Beauty gone, spirit quenched, what is there I would or could compass to disturb the calm serenity of this promoted *paysanne*? 'Loves her husband.' I tell you, she is false as Judas. 'Twas the Manor she played for; having which, I or any other poor devil may go—I know her thoroughly. Pride, ambition, a will of inflexible steel; her velvet manner—a mask! Sergius, you have not my experience with women. Beware of her! At parting, my heart nigh broke. A few days—let me be just, twenty—and she is comfortably married to Sir Burleigh. Happy in his unbounded indulgence as he in her supposed love—she is a demon! a demon! Hold, this is a politic letter. I will bring S. F., as I must for good reasons. Try and conjure away B. C.'s dislike of him. Bal must also come—surely there is room enough there? The complete absence of V. C. is indispensable—also that he be most carefully watched. We will red our spurs to get there soon. Commend me to B. C. and the witch his dame. You shall see my good government in this the rather as the Marquise de B. Yet stop. You sober and serious will only listen to this after dinner. All news, sur-

mises and suspects on our meeting. Good wishes.

"Always your friend,

"S.

"P.S. Burn this."

* * * * * *

Terror took hold of me when I heard that Casimir was coming.

"In your changed relations to me, and as Lady of the Manor," said Sir Burleigh, "there must be none of the childish levity which marked your former meeting. He will expect ceremony. That was well enough then—for any man of his rank may admire a pretty damsel, he chances on: as a Clifford, he must treat you with the respect and distinction of a Court dame. See, therefore, that you deserve it by courtesy and distance—by loyal respect." I listened in dismayed silence, with downcast eyes, into which I felt slow terror creep as it may be seen to dilate the eyes of a child who is promised the sight of a spectre. Had I been a less guilty wretch, I should but have smiled at this lecture on formalism and, philosopher-wise, reflected that he could scarce expect Court-bred training from a country-dame.

"Do not turn white," said he, "though I can forgive you for that. For 'tis an awful thing,

Helen, to reflect on the destiny attendant on him, to put away for a while the bodily presence, to think only of the power descended to him from past ages."

"Come, my dear, you look as you would swoon. The Prince would be concerned to think a proper and becoming awe of him should degenerate into a peasant-like fear."

"I do not fear him!" said I fiercely, all the chased blood rushing back in a boiling wave to my heart—to my head. "I hate him, Sir Burleigh, I will not see him! You may be abject in your adoration of this clay idol—'tis your life-long creed. For me, I am clear of any other fetish-worship than that of the Cliffords—and that's but slight, as you will find should you strain your authority."

Sir Burleigh's eyes nigh started from his head at this unexpected defiance, his face purpled nearly to blackness; while I, feeling more concern for his physical than his mental state, stood by—fury ebbing, prepared for submission, rather than that he should suffer.

"Go from my sight," he stammered at last, "or I may strike you! Go!"

"Oh, my God!" I heard him say as I went, convulsed with grief, fear, and anger. "Helen to turn on me! Helen Rohan!"

"Sir, I am here." I re-entered swiftly, tears pouring down my face because of his displeasure, and, before he could repel me or resume his wrath, I embraced him, hiding my face on his breast, trembling and wretched enough to die.

Some pity for me came to him, even as it might to an idolater whose idol had been rudely struck—pity for the ignorance, the unworthiness of the striker who knew no better, who walked in darkness.

"My dear," said he, though still sternly putting me away from him, "I expected a better spirit from you—that, even had it been but as a friend of mine, you would, to please me, have strove to observe my wishes. As it is, his misfortunes might compel reverence from a savage—stripped of his kingdom, shorn of all outward splendour, sure it should be enough to know him for our rightful Prince to soften the hardest heart."

I stood listening, so ill, so wretched, that pain itself became unreal, petrified. Worse could not be. Slowly I turned and left the study, stumbling upstairs to the state-rooms, walking ghostlike up and down their polished floors, seeing the familiar pictures as though I saw them not. Presently I heard another step, and stayed mine. It was Sir Burleigh in search of me.

"Come, my dear," said he cheerfully, "I did not mean to be harsh with you; you misunderstood me, sweet! Come and forgive me!"

"'I cannot kiss and that's the humour of it,'" said I, quoting Wynne; and, evading the outstretched arms, I left him to follow, laughing. "That's right," said he as we gained the dressing-room, "but I can kiss for both, my dear."

"Do not," said I imploringly, "you leave red patches on my face, and I design to wear white and look handsome."

"You pert pye!" said he. "Was you not more in love with your beauty than your husband, you could not so put me off. Indeed you are a handsome woman, Nell, and mannerly as any princess. I am sorry I put you out by my preachment."

"There, there!" said I, kissing him, "let that end it, sir. It was not you, but my own unworthiness put me out. Your best plan were to send me to the Farm for a while, where I should be in no one's way. No stumblingblock—no rock of offence!" Spite of myself, my lips quivered, tears flowed afresh.

Sir Burleigh, repenting of his penitence, swore, and I, dressing in dismal silence, laced my white velvet bodice too tightly, and tied the blue Jacobite ribbon he directed me to wear under

its broad collar, as much from sight as I could.

"It spoils the pearls!" said I petulantly, as he pulled it forward.

"D——n the pearls!" said he. "I have a mind, madam, that you shall wear no jewels, if you are ashamed of being a Jacobite!"

"I will wear them!" I clapsed a heavy coil round my throat. "Am I to go naked in that I refuse to spoil my dress with this indigo rag?" I took it off and trampled on it. Not that it marred my robe, but that a new anger was stealing like fire through my veins—that I was forced to adorn myself to please the eyes of Casimir.

"Vashti was a fool to you!" said Sir Burleigh with a sigh, relinquishing a contest which, like Greek fire, eluded him at one point, to break out again, and yet again, at others.

"Let me go to the Farm," said I, sobbing in an anguish that tore my heart. "I cannot meet these princes, peers! 'Tis not that alone! I am ill!"

"My God!" said he, stamping. "When I spoke, 'twas with no intention of offending your pride!—which I might have known was that of Lucifer or Ashtaroth!"

Pride! The dismal incongruity of pride

belonging to me, made me laugh. I stooped and picked up the trodden ribbon, presenting it to him. "Put it on me!" said I. "To please or content you, I would wear a chain!" The trembling tone of voice, the humility of manner, disarmed his just anger at what, to him, must have seemed mere folly. He put it on kindly enough, in silence; then, taking my hand, we went downstairs and out on to the terrace, expecting our guests would soon arrive.

It wanted yet an hour to sunset. In the west all was golden and glorious. Eastward, light mists were rising beneath the thick shades of oak and beech. One end of the terrace was in shade: to this we went.

The day had been tropical in its heat, the mildness of evening came gratefully near, and, as we sat on a stone bench in an embrasure of the terrace-wall, the pleasantness and peace of our domain half-soothed away our differing troubles. Sir Burleigh forgivingly passed his arm round my shoulders. My head rested gratefully on his arm. Sometimes he would stoop to kiss my lips gently, sometimes my closed eyelids. It is well to be loved:—even fear fled as I felt how much I was to him; and, when our guests rode up, and Craig had led the horses away, I was ready, after the noisier

greetings of the men subsided, to submit to their presentation to me, courtesying to each a welcome to the Manor—even to Casimir, who, by accident or design, came last.

That was hard, though. I dared not look into his face; but, after my formal and profound courtesy and welcome, was glad once more to feel Sir Burleigh's arm around me. I trembled excessively as he led me to our seat, with which, I think, he was not ill-pleased, concluding it to be a tribute to the awe-inspiring presence of Stuart—as it was.

How he excused me, I do not know—for all with him entered the house, and I sat alone, watching the sunset. Probably the great heat of the day would be pleaded for me—to whom drouth or frost in the past had mattered nothing. They were not to know this, however. Presently Lord Kilmarnock came out and joined me, chatting very agreeably, requiring no response. Then the rest reappeared, and gathered in a group, awaiting the summons to dinner, which soon came. Kilmarnock took me in, for there was no formal recognition of rank—for which I had cause to feel devoutly thankful. The purple twilight without was falling in lovely shades over the turf, giving to the ferny braes tints of asphodel.

Within, lit by unstinted waxlights, was this meeting of prominent Jacobites—a nest it would mightily please George Guelph to lay his German paw upon. Yet we were secure enough. Wheat-harvest had withdrawn the hinds to the far-outlying farms; as an additional security, the park-gates were locked at night. At dinner, where presiding I made the sixth, no pretension to fine dress was made by any of the gentlemen present, who had ridden hard all day, other than scrupulous neatness: so my white velvet and pearls, put on to please Sir Burleigh, seemed a little out of place. Yet, out of love with life they none disquieted me.

They were a kind and genial company, nor did I by any sign or silentness damp their flow of spirits—rather, listening to Kilmarnock, who was on my right, enjoyed his quaint conceits and ready wit, helping him on the road to laughter. Everyone talked—few listening, save Craig, who was assiduously waiting, aided by Janet, who kept outside. Craig listened for all; but Craig was safe, and Janet a staunch Jacobite.

There is nothing to linger for after dinner, as wine and cards come together later; so we all go out on to the terrace and walk or loiter in groups, enjoying the sweet summer-air. Kilmarnock kindly keeps with me, and the pale-faced one,

whom, in speaking to, they all address as "Sir," devotes himself to Sir Burleigh, without so much as looking my way; so that, when Kilmarnock presently, taking me by the hand, draws near them, and asks a laughing leave of Sir Burleigh to escort me to the lake, I am surprised into blushing when, at last, his eyes turn to me.

"Yes," says Sir Burleigh, graciously, pleased with Kilmarnock's friendliness and desirous of pleasing me. So down the steps we go, hand in hand, like brother and sister, and away into the broad champlain leading to the lake, brushing the silvered dew from the ferns, and crushing the sweet odours from the thymy park-turf. The exquisite sapphire tints still linger in the sky, despite the moon-rays, which fight a silent battle with them, of pure whiteness. Amid all this summer-beauty, the lake lies changeless. It looks black and old, and, tired as I feel, I ask Kilmarnock if he thinks it bituminous.

"On my word, I know very little of geology," he answers, "yet 'tis not unlikely it has some such quality, bitumen having power to impart blackness to bodies of water such as this."

"I have but read of it," I say, my thoughts elsewhere, my voice mournful as it floats out over the still lake, not greatly caring whether bitumen is black or white or grey.

"Were I hanged for it," says Kilmarnock, "I could give no better explanation of its dark colour, than that it is bituminous; but, madam, let me ask you, as I before meant, would it discontent you, with Sir Burleigh's good leave, to call me Sergius, as the others all use—ay, even your husband's self?"

"If it please you," said I, "I will take it upon myself to call you Sergius—sure of Sir Burleigh's content." With that, he kisses my hand as one renamed.

"Bitumen," he said presently, proving that he knew more than he professed. "There are lakes of it in Central Asia, beating about the tops of extinct volcanoes, of which you were doubtless thinking, resembling this in colour."

"I had not to my remembrance read of them, the image must at some time have occurred to my mind or mention of it been made without my conscious remark. Not desirous of seeming better informed than was the case, I confessed my ignorance and changed the subject. Kilmarnock, who had been many times in France, discoursed of the dances there, which, he said, gave such liking and zest to the life of the poorest, and contrasted with them the reserve and melancholy of the English labourers. "Poor things!" I said, "there is too much laid upon

them, and a heavy reckoning will come on those self-lovers who add field to field, ever weighing down the heavy-burdened."

"I am glad to hear you speak so," he said, "but good government will rectify many of these abuses, and with one at the head of affairs generous to a fault, no grinding taxation will be suffered to weigh on them. All burdens will be lightened, by his justice and willingness to consider the poor and him that hath no helper."

As he spoke thus, I could but blush to think in my secure life how little I had done. "I will do better," I said aloud, in abasement of spirit: "being miserable gives one fellowship to the afflicted. I might forget my pain in helping others."

"You are doing better," said Kilmarnock, "in helping on a return of better times. It is but little real aid to classes that one can do; meanwhile, do not distress yourself, as you are no way answerable for the condition of things existent. Nor did I mean to make you unhappy."

"Sergius would make a whole conventicle pleasantly unhappy," said Stuart's voice—he, together with Sir Burleigh, joining us. "He would point out their sins and the downward road, let the red flame-light dance in their eyes and

brimstone assail their noses; and then, after raising their fears, counsel them to heaven."

"So then, sir, I should be a good preacher?"

"Ay, if your practise were consistent," quoth his master, drily.

"In what doth it differ?" said Sir Burleigh, amused.

"In that, having preached to others, he is himself a castaway."

"Come, Sergius," said Sir Burleigh, "he is too hard for you. Let us home, and leave preaching to the fishes!"

Kilmarnock offered me his hand, but Stuart interposed—begging he might be my escort. This allowed, Sir Burleigh took Kilmarnock's arm, relying on us to follow—which attempting, I was stopped silently, but perforce.

"Sir!" said I, in bitter wrath, "I prefer returning alone, and would have done but for the angry frantic figure I should present to the rest on the terrace."

Angry and frantic went in my mind presently from myself to him, as a storm of invective swept over me. Was I not a Judas—a betrayer. Did I judge avoidance possible of a man so grossly wronged, heartbroke as he? I should see. He cared for no consequences, would sacrifice a million friends to regain me.

"Sir," I said fiercely, not brooking reproach from him, "though I were Aholibah or her sister, you would have the answering it!" and so turned on my heel and left him, going swiftly homeward winged with rage and scorn at his daring and meanness, and leaving him *planté* on the mere's margin.

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Entrance by another way than the terrace was not so easily effected but that I passed Janet and Craig in deep consultation in the courtyard where were the stables. They took but little note of me, however, and I was about retiring up the wide staircase, when, seeing through the wide-open hall-door the beautiful panorama of the moonlit park stretching vast and silent before it, framed in as by an arch, I sat down on the shadowy stairs, and endeavoured to forget my disquiet in the calm without—to relegate my trouble to the limbo of the everyday frets which afflict humanity, but which should be allowed no permanent hold on the mind. I had partially succeeded in deceiving myself with that notion—that I sat there for calm's sake—when, with a shudder, the conviction came creeping to me from the broad silvery landscape, from the cobwebbed corners, from the vast empty suite

of the state-rooms, that I sat there with quite another aim—that, in short, I waited, as any self-undeceiving Messalina might have waited for her lover, to see Stuart enter.

"Most truly am I a degraded wretch!" I mutter; yet stir I could not. I was as a timid bird—something against my strongest powers of reasoning forced me to await on his return. Like Ravaillac, the assassin of Henri Quatre, who, whilst under torture, curiously regarded the gaping wounds into which presently hot lead was to be poured, so I speculated on the agony awaiting me of the rejection of Stuart's attempts at reconciliation. I, as well as Ravaillac, knew it was inevitable—that no struggles of my own could alter even the form of torture; yet could I not keep my mind from dwelling on it. A curious little calm figure to compare with that of the tortured assassin, yet I doubt he would not have changed, even when the glow of heated metal approached his bleeding flesh. After all, hell needeth not material torments.

So sate I on in the dusky shadows, seeing the guests enter in groups, and presently settle to cards, from which I was free, as they played high and preferred the liberty of rough words when they were vexed at any turn of the

chances—sate on till a longing to hear even the distant echo of his voice drew me down to the terrace, step by step, irresistibly as fate draws us on year by year whether we will or no. Passing unheeded up and down in the moonlight, I could see the several faces within the room, eager some, some impassive, all excited. Stuart was the gayest, he seemed to be the greatest loser. Kilmarnock from time to time looked at him covertly, with a half-smile on his resolute mouth—a glance which, catching once, he retorted with a frown quick and petulant as a woman's. Whether or no Kilmarnock saw me pass from within, I know not; but, a game coming to a close, he resigned his place to an onlooker—for, being five and the game whist, one was necessarily out—and presently joined me on the terrace.

He looked at me reproachfully, and with but a shadow of his former friendliness said: "Madam, it is late and lonely for you to be here, and it grieves a humble friend that you take so little thought to your health and wellbeing."

With all his goodness, there was a savour of the conventicle in Kilmarnock's manner when displeased, and so catholic is mind, that, while far from being amused, I yet took note of it and smiled.

"Be content, Sergius," I said, offering him my hand to escort me in my walk, the "countryfolk are used to air and exposure, and are hardened to that which might kill a city-dame."

"So," said Sergius, relenting, and taking my meaning to the foot of the letter. "So you raise those lovely roses whose beauty kills us?"

"You have, sir, a warm hand for a corse!"

"And a warmer heart!" quoth Kilmarnock—"a heart that desires only good to you, Lady Clifford, to whom you are already dear as a sister, for whom I risk—— Go in at once!" he broke off low, but imperative. "I hear the game concluded. Take my counsel—it is in the best interests of all."

"You know not what you say," I rejoined with a strained attempt at indifference. "I cannot nor will fly from a phantom-danger, I am strong, though I thank you for your counsel, I am no reed in the wind."

"Lady Clifford," said he earnestly, "pardon me, that, as a man of the world and one who is most sincerely desirous of befriending you, I repeat that strict avoidance is your only safe policy, avoidance of a great and present danger. It is, I am aware, going beyond the lines of our so recent acquaintance to counsel you thus strongly. Yet, how can I refrain, knowing so

well of whom I speak, of the links which must now be resolutely taken and cast aside, or fixed on as a galling and lifelong chain? My wish is to see you free and happy—to accomplish which I am thus bold with you. Forgive me!"

I was scarcely moved by this appeal; relying on the hardihood with which I could suffer, it seemed to me unreal that anyone could truly hope to aid me to escape this great and present danger and torture. So might Ravaillac have felt moved by a kind face, a pitying voice among the crowd: the cruel anguish went on in spite of it. Extraneous help there could be none, no more than to Dives in his fiery gulf from the angels who were his neighbours. Kilmarnock knew all, and yet he pitied me—undeserving unworthy as I was.

"I will go in," I said at last dully, seeing that he waited for some concession. "Do not think me ungrateful; it is that, pluck out what arrow-heads you may, the iron is in my soul."

Disregarding this, doubtless classing it as a feminine exaggeration, he lent me his strong hand to lead me in. We had been at the extreme end of the terrace, and, seeing some of the party on the Hall-steps, I went round to the gate leading to the quadrangular courtyard which enclosed the Hall at the back. It was a deep em-

brasured gate with stone seats on either side and an archway above it, all now in blackest darkness, as the moon-rays were vertical. Inside the gaunt courtyard, with its central dovecote, was in brightest light. Wishing Kilmarnock good rest, I suffered him to kiss my hand and went on as in a dreary trance, chidden by my husband's guest, hurrying from the one love of my life, who, in utter indifference save to the outward aspect of things, was in very comfortable middle-earth whilst I was in hell. The loud song of the lark roused me the next morning to the consciousness of a very cramped and uneasy posture on the hard wooden state-bed. I had not undressed, and had barely time to rise and seem as though my robing were completed before Janet entered with hot water.

"Eh!" she said, glancing at the disordered counterpane which revealed the smooth planed wood, "Sir Burleigh's heir should be a soldier for his mother disna mind hardships, an', if he sleeps harder in camp than you last night, he'll have to be on iron."

"Let be, Janet!" I said, blushing angrily at this allusion. "There may never be such a thing."

"Thing!" said Janet indignantly. "You'll be a nice mother, Helen Rohan, forby you don't spoil

your own chances by such doings. So surely as you live, I'll make up a bed here for you, whether you will or no. I never heard of anyone sleeping on wood before and enjoying it."

By this, I was beyond her remonstrances, and soon drinking milk-coffee in the study, still card-bestrewn, and littered with bottles and glasses, which Craig was carefully piling into a silver-tray, not omitting, like a careful Scot, to pick up and pocket the small change which strewed the carpet. Guineas, Craig always honestly and without fail put on the mantelpiece, even half-guineas, but anything less was his—spoils of the Amalekites. It was amusing to see his deliberation over the process of counting his gains. My presence made not the slightest difference, except that he asked me to calculate the amount for him and enter it in a book he kept in his pocket.

"A tenth," he explained, "goes to the auld mither in Ayrshire—wages too!"

"You are a good son!" I say, interested.

"Ou ay, milady! May your leddyship hae as gude a ane," said Craig, "which I doubtna will e'en be sae!"

"Handsomer, I hope!" muttered a voice, as Craig withdrew, and, from the deep window-

recess where he had stood hidden by the down-sweep of the curtain, Stuart emerged.

I was none surprised, knowing that his whole soul was set on compassing a private interview; yet was I something angry that he should be the third in one hour to confirm my own suspicions that such an event was not improbable—nay, even possible. "Will you choose coffee, sir," I said, pouring some out, "or a dish of tea?"

"Coffee!" said he, "if it please you, madam, to bring it me."

He seated himself in the open window, with all the glory of the early summer-morning as a background, with the music of clear-carolling birds encompassing him, with the warmth of shafting sun-rays giving life to his pallor of last night's dissipation, and to me he looked like some pale Apollo who had sate up too late and was scarce warm or awake.

Though angry and divining his motive, I could not well refuse the courtesy of carrying the cup to him, though I had rather swallowed its scalding contents than met or allowed the searching glance with which from head to foot he surveyed me. I felt myself grow pale and burning red, and, but for hastily resigning it, the cup must have fallen from my hands.

"I never could understand the *agrément* of blushing," he said, as I returned to my seat, "it must have so great a variety of ill-effects: in the first place, the heart is called on for a double action, to send the blood at a moment to the surface, and then to withdraw it; and after, it spoils the clearness of the skin. I never blush."

"It is scarce necessary," said I, "that those who keep dogs should themselves bark. Perchance, sir, others blush for you!"

"It is, if so, very good of them," said he, "but more perfectly unnecessary. If I feel shame, it is a scorch to my very soul—a lance-shaft through my heart—an agony that transfixes me, insomuch that your blushes are well done by beside me."

"I hope," said I, "that all this preserves intact that purity of skin which is so greatly to be aimed at?" I spoke in that malice which is the foster-sister of misery—that biting of the trapped rat which lessens no feeling of its pain, but is mechanical, because life and movement are inseparable. As such, he seemed to take it without resenting. His eyes looked deep and haggard—his lips quivered. He brought back the little gold and green cup to be refilled, and signed to Craig, who had re-entered with muffins,

to bring it to him. Then, when the door closed on Craig, he put it down and took up a gazette.

"Helen," he said, "the price is still set on my head. I am yet proscribed, a fugitive and in danger."

No more appeal, no excusing of himself—only that awful fact that in all the world of life around him, some might profit by *his* death; that the tenure of other lives, however insecure, still were safe, compared to his, which appealed to the worst human passions for its destruction, which could be destroyed safely, and without open infamy—nay, even be called patriotism.

"Is it?" said I, drearily. "It is a villainous proclamation, worthy of African savages. Why do you not retort it on the German? That, if anything, would demonstrate, even to them, its utter baseness."

"That is just, and is under careful consideration by all of us, whether descending to so abject a mode of warfare is consistent with the justice and uprightness of our cause. There can be no nice-dealing with an assassin and a German hog, and he cannot complain of the standard of his own measure. Proclaim a price for him!—by God, I will!" said he. "And, to pay it, I would pawn my jewels—ay, sell them.

We are not so *banqueroute* that we cannot raise so much."

After this there was a long silence:—our thoughts strayed from ourselves to those vast political considerations—the attempt, apparently desperate, of these few men to change or oust a dynasty involved, I thought, shame to myself as, insensibly, my thoughts again narrowed to our present circumstances, if I should, suffer as I might, upbraid him with the past. I endeavoured, after my old stoicism, my old belief, that individual peace must succumb to general tranquillity—that the bitter grief, the abject despair through which I had passed, should be forgotten.

With this thought came crowding others, keen as serpents, striking to my very heart. I might aid, but could not forgive; I might banish, but could not forget the man in the prince. Involuntarily I covered my eyes with my hand: these stings, these poisoned arrows, caused an agony I wished to shield from outward betrayal. Of formal reference to the past, there could be none. In bitterness, it must linger in the heart of each—in his, betrayal, ingratitude, cruelty, in the manner of his desertion; in mine, abasement and self-contempt.

So swiftly will gravest questions be merged in personal feeling, that the political aspect of

Stuart's presence here vanished. I regarded him as a hardened and careless man of the world, wantonly inflicting by it pain and humiliation on a woman who had loved and trusted him; and bitter anger rose in my heart. Why had he come? Was it not enough that, but for Sir Burleigh, I should now be an outcast or dead—that this loving friend, who had rescued me from despair, was his ally in a desperate cause, his faithful friend and helper at need?

"You have risen early," I say, at length forcing myself to put an end to the silence. "I hope you met with every attention from Craig. Sir Burleigh says he is an excellent valet."

"He is; but I am not here to discuss Craig. I am my own valet, or rather I have not been to bed all night. I have been in hell, every moment a torture, a literal hell to me, *par préférence*. How did you get back? What is it like? Easily enough. It is like a false and shameless woman. I thought it was a sort of kingdom, ruled over by the prince of the powers of this world. I—I thought it was a farm where an unhappy, wretched woman lived, I think it is here—here in this scene of semi-riot, this card-bestrewn study." I groped for and found a resting place for my head on the table, amid the

litter of coffee-cups, hating the light and brightness which, to reach me, must come past him; hating the day, life, movement; desirous of death, that the mockery my life had been might stop; that the pain at my heart might cease to agonise—the dull desolateness of never-ending-days to weary. Tears, those superficial types of easily-healed grief, could not effect this. It was voiceless, blind, and boundless.

"Helen, you are hurting yourself—not me. Control yourself."

With an effort, I lifted up my face, as one condemned might obey the order of an executioner. Of what avail the outward signs of such a grief as mine? As well, being still sane, avoid the mockery attendant on the world's judgment of a rived heart; let no curious eyes note unsympathetically the ravage of deadly grief. At that instant, Craig came in with fresh coffee, followed by Lord Kilmarnock, who came kindly forward and took my hand. I was not conscious of offering or of withdrawing it, only of his searching glance resting on my face, in pity and alarm; then, turning to the tall figure at the window, who now was gazing outward at the beauty of the park:

"Let me advise a turn on the terrace," said Kilmarnock, without waiting for my assent;

indeed, I was incapable of words. He led me out of the stifling walls—out into the fragrance and beauty of the morning, and as remote as to the far end of the walk, where was a stone bench built in a recess of the wall. Left here, my wan eyes surveyed the scene as we look on familiar objects after a long sickness or absence; here, seeing my disquiet, he kindly left me to recover in the sweet presence of nature, who can soothe us in almost every extreme of ill, almost as with the voice of God.

Skylarks were ascending in hundreds from the dewy turf; in copse and oak thicket birds sang rejoicing. The magnificent oaks stood like towers of foliage through which slant-sunbeams stole to the long green ferns beneath. I found myself watching them as they quivered from bough to bough—bringing not alone comfort to the turf and herbage, but rest to my heart so far as 'twas susceptible to rest at the moment.

Kilmarnock walked to the other end of the terrace, and stood there as though on guard. Stuart had turned himself round about, facing someone within the study to whom he was talking. I heard as in a trance the distant remembered tone of his voice. It was Sir Burleigh, always an early-riser, who was answering. I hoped he would come out and

take me in; my limbs felt weak and powerless, nor would I risk an exhibition of their mutiny by trying to walk in alone—I was, as it were, dissolved in this poison of pain.

"May I offer you my arm?" Kilmarnock must have seen my essay to rise. He stood beside me, his tone was gentle, his eyes grave; his hand had the warm close grasp of a brother's as he took mine, cold and trembling, and drew it through his arm. "Now," said he kindly, "I am going to beseech the favour of Lady Clifford's company so far as to the lake. Do you fear wet shoes on the turf? No! Then we will not turn our backs on this most delicious morning!" And so, revived by the elastic sunny air as by wine, I went on momently gathering strength, resolved not to succumb, if human effort availed, to the torpor of this pain.

Alas! what are resolves opposed to the cruel immutable laws of our nature? The sight, as we stood before it, of the dark moving mass of water, rippled by the fresh breeze, brought a dreadful swimming vertigo to me—all the whole world seemed to be slowly revolving. I tried to conquer it with my last conscious effort, reviving only to learn that I had fainted, and was still supported in Kilmarnock's arms. "It

is the first time in my life," I said, shamefacedly lifting my eyes to his in apology and contrition, that he should be victim of this untoward weakness. "I am very sorry—very sor——!" and to prove it, or commit a crowning folly, broke into hysteric sobs and tears irrepressible. Neither angry, scornful, nor impatient—though I was all three with myself—he would not suffer me to withdraw from the support of his arms till, the paroxysm over, I could blush, and express anew my regret at being so troublesome to him, a stranger.

"'I was a stranger, and ye took me not in,'" said he. "Do not call me a stranger, Lady Clifford! It is presumptuous, I know—yet I feel to you as a brother, or an old friend! You will trust me, I am sure!"

"Yes!" said I, blushing and paling, conscious that he was cognizant of the whole past, and perchance connecting it in his mind with this imbecility of the present—perhaps scornful pitying of so weak a fool on whom he had in vain bestowed counsel. "It must not be known that I fainted," I said, anxiously. To this he made no answer, resolutely turning his eyes from my beseeching gaze, refusing to pledge himself to silence, perhaps regarding it as of a gravity which it could not claim, as it

was but symptomatic of an unusual strain on the mind and heart, and not organic weakness.

Arrived at the Hall, I thanked him for his care and went upstairs, where, in one of the deserted state-rooms under a canopy of faded lilac satin, flower-embroidered, shaded by the downsweep of the sheeny curtains, I sought to sleep on the hard wood. For a long time, my eyes, stiff and scalded with hot tears, would not close ; at length, sleep fanning and delicious came wrapping me away from this world in Elysian dreams.

When I awoke with a strange sound in mine ears, I saw Sir Burleigh sitting in an armchair beside the bed, trying, as the arms were low, to lean over and rest his head on the silk-covered wooden bolster. This he succeeded in doing, but, after a few seconds, withdrew, with a dissatisfied grunt at its hardness ; this manœuvre he repeated several times, unaware of my watching him. I could not at last avoid a laugh at his perseverance.

"What! awake," said he, "at last, Helen?"

"Who could remain asleep, sir, with that pillow-fight going on close to their ears?"

"Eh!" said he, "if you are going to give me this vigil often, my dear, I will have these cursed wooden pillows removed."

"Vigil!" said I, in amaze, "an hour's sleep!"

"See," said he drawing out his watch, "it is four o'clock evening. You have slept seven hours, every minute of which I have spent here—nor grudged a second, so that it did you good. You are better, I hope?"

"Yes," said I, indifferently, "I am all right. Did Milord Kilmarnock tell you I fainted at the lake-side this morning?"

"My dear, of course it was that alarmed me. I thought you might swoon in your sleep. It has made me very unhappy—very anxious."

"Ah!" said I, "nonsense! When I was only Helen Rohan, you thought me, rightly, tough as pinwire, as I am."

"That I swear I never did!" he rejoined, indignantly. "You shall not get up so early—mind that, madam!"

"Will you reduce me to evasions, sir, like the lady in the story? Shall I tell it you, that you may see the effect of harsh prohibition? Listen."

"Nay," said he, "I will listen to no stories of disobedient wives. Mine is all duty and complaisance, as all would be if they had as good husbands."

I laughed at this, and, dismissing him downstairs while I changed my dimity morning-gown for a silk sacque, and arranged my hair, bathing

my face in rosewater to banish the traces of sleep and tears, I followed.

"Here is my sweet rose!" said Sir Burleigh, proudly, as I appeared on the terrace, blushing as much as the rose-hues of my silk gown at being the immediate centre of all eyes—the victim, as I complained afterwards to Kilmarnock, of inquiries for my health.

"Why," said he, "of course we are anxious twice told—once on Sir Burleigh's account, and doubly so on that of our sweet and charming hostess. Old Balmerino is in love with you. Fraser Lovat too. Me also. So, Lady Clifford, forgive us that our friendship is exacting as it is sincere."

"You are too kind!" I murmured, the momentary glow of excitement over, still feeling weak and tremulous.

"You will not take what I said seriously, but, being nearly infallible as to health, it is strange to me, and dreadful, to be ill, as it would be to a Pope to be wrong."

Yet through all the evening hours, through the long dinner, I was conscious of terrible weakness, of a desire to be away from people, away from eyes and tongues, at rest either asleep or dead. I managed by a supreme effort to get through my duties as hostess. Kilmarnock

alone seemed aware that it was effort and not strength, aiding me greatly by keeping the talk on politics, in which I was not expected to join. Stuart's haughty face gave no sign of disquiet beyond a whiter hue than ordinary as he noted Kilmarnock's assiduous attentions, which were simply due to his pity for my weakness. Kilmarnock had a very noble face; regarding him attentively as he talked to me aside, I thought him like one of the portraits by Titian in the gallery, and presently being haunted by the likeness told him so, at which he laughed, asking in what special particular he resembled this "portrait of a gentleman?"

"Why!" said I, laughing too, "should I tell you? I run a dread risk of being a self-flatterer."

"Ay," said he, "I know some portraits have that way of following one with their eyes, but, Lady Clifford, at that rate every man not born blind will be like a portrait by Titian, where you are. I must see to-morrow if I may not claim the likeness on more special grounds."

The laugh and slight confusion on either side with which we debated this unmeant flattery did not escape Stuart; he could not hear the words, being held in talk by Balmerino, but his eyes contracted in that Highland way Sandy's used to when he was angry. Glad to be free, yet unable

to enjoy freedom, on leaving the dinner-table I repaired upstairs, too tired to join the company on the terrace. I went to the picture-gallery. Sitting in one of the wide window-seats, listening absently to the hum of voices below, I looked out on the wide park, so noble in its expanse and its beauty, feeling as a worm might feel in the heart of a rose, could it be conscious of the canker it there causes. A lothly lady, object of my own scorn, feeble alike in good or ill, vacillating, uncertain, a witch without spells, a poison-bottle empty, anything typical of impotent ill, would fit me.

Purple shades of evening fell, veil on veil so thin, fine, impalpable, that the rush of the stars was checked, and they came out in courtly crowds, gently covering the sky ere one was aware of twilight's ending.

It was still light in the great gallery; its western aspect held the last rays of daylight through its range of windows. Silent and fragrant—peopled only with the past—my thoughts strayed away from my hateful humanity to an ideal world of long-ago times—of statesmen who were marvels of wisdom; women pure and lovely as amaranth; kings whose rule was direct inspiration from heaven. In that long-ago world were no jarring factions,

no discordant lives, no erring women, no men of wavering honour or cold cruelty, no Helen Rohans or fugitive Casimirs, or else—delicious thought which stole like balm to my heart!—they were forgiven, pardoned, reconciled, never again to cause each other unhappiness.

From this dangerous reverie, I came back sharply to realities. "That," thought I, in bitter pain, "can never be. He does not desire it, nor do I. What am I to him more than other weak women? For a moment perhaps struck by my undeserved promotion, by the devotion of Sir Burleigh, the passing admiration of his friends for a fair face, he may fancy himself returning to the feelings—half-real, half-simulated—of our past meeting; but here was the test, the truth, the bitter alchymy—transmuting the fairy gold to dross. Had I been only a farm-wench, disgraced in the eyes of her homely circle, or cast out to find a lower level, would he have spent more than a passing thought—a half-amused regret on my memory? Would he have sought me out, soothed my misery with care and tenderness, been just or grateful to the humble, poor wretch who had aided him? I trow not!" said I, bitterly, "and in that belief have I proved that the children of this world are in

their generation wiser than the children of light." This reflection was infinitely bitter to me—that he did not care for me, yet would not cease to assert that he did, in that, as Lady Clifford, I was more easily accessible, more a mark for his friend's envy—a glory to his own vanity and self-love. I bit my lip as this conviction forced itself on my mind. "He shall see," quoth I, "that a promoted *paysanne* can deserve promotion so far as in the present," and, Craig opportunely coming with a message—"Mr. Casimir desired leave to pay his duty to my ladyship"—I told Craig to light up the small yellow drawing-room, and request him to rest there. Then I went and rouged myself to an angry redness with a box of China rouge left by Fernie on her toilette—determined no wan looks should tell any tale of mental suffering. I did not need the rouge, the fiery wine of anger coursed through my blood as I thought of the Helen Rohan I might have been, and the Lady Clifford I was—the one, an outcast, the scorn perchance of some country hiring-mop; the other, raised to rank and power by the wealth and station so ungrudgingly given by Sir Burleigh.

"Oh," said I, setting my teeth, "if for you, for your false and treacherous passion, for your

heart which is a very quicksand, for your love which would have forgotten me, had I passed into the ranks of the peasantry, which would have ignored me in any disgrace or degradation, for you—you I forget Sir Burleigh's goodness, his steady unwavering kindness, I deserve that the earth swallow me, that the roof of the Hall fall on and crush me. I will see you! Why should I not? You shall tell your little Stuart fable of constancy, act the *trouvère* if it so please you; go on your knees, on a soft spot of the Perse rug—it will not hurt your knees; swear as you would to a languid French marquise of eternal love, and I—I will say, 'Sir, I have repented loving you—'twas but a silly girl's enthusiasm. Send no more messages to your old friend's wife. Desire no more to revive the past—it is past. I have suffered, but Sir Burleigh shall not. As a guest, you may come here for a thousand years, and meet no more than all the Cliffords of all the centuries might accord to a guest.'"

Filled with stern, with heroic resolves of renunciation, I went slowly downstairs, entering the yellow drawing-room noiselessly as a shadow. Craig was just lighting the last of the wax-lights in the girandoles.

"Ah!" said I as Stuart came forward with a

low bow, "you have tired of politics, sir? Is not Lord Kilmarnock equally entitled to rest, and the others? I am afraid you are a hard task-master."

"That will suffice," said he, as Craig withdrew, closing the door. "I ventured to send for you, madam, to know what my status is to be."

"What do you mean?" said I indignantly. "I hope no discourtesy will be shown you as a guest. For the rest you can arrange etiquette with your followers at your own pleasure."

"That, it seems, I cannot," said he, coldly. "Lord Kilmarnock figures chiefest here."

"That is your affair, sir. Mere countryfolk cannot pretend to the niceties of rank and ceremony. All we can offer is kindness and goodwill, equally to all our guests. Yet, if you will condescend a hint as to how we may do better——"

"Helen, you are a fool!" said he, bitterly. "I can see all this is rehearsed."

"And very well done for a provincial player, is it not—for a peasant?"

"Very well indeed. The rouge might be more artistically put on. It is rather patchy."

I put my hand on my breast, contracted by a sudden spasm of bitter hate and pain; and, walking to a mirror, regarded with a hollow laugh

the ghastly effect of the unnatural red on my face, whitened and ghastly with pain and anger.

Stuart stood regarding me with a cynical smile which, for a moment, brought a whirlwind of rage to my heart, nearly betrayed into outward expression. That might amuse him further, thought I, driving it back with an effort that further blanched my face. I have not come to amuse, but to torture him as I am tortured.

"It is absurd," said I, "that, when you condescend to ask an interview, I should come to it burdened with old memories. Consider them forgotten, sir—and I, acting for the Cliffords, anxious only for your comfort and pleasure while you honour us by your presence."

"Helen," said he, "you are mad!"

"I can do no better," said I. "This is my first attempt at châtelaine—and—and something amiss, no doubt. Would you prefer a blue room to a red, or a panelled wall to hangings? At the Farm was but one wretched lodgment to offer; here, we can put our guests at any distance, in any chamber they may choose. Tell me, then, how we may contribute to your comfort."

He would not answer—smiling disdainfully, regarding me as a critic might an inferior player. I walked about the room, avoiding, by groping blindly for them with my outstretched hands, the

tables and other plenishing. Suddenly, like an inspiration over the wild agony of my thoughts, came the whisper: "You are free! why do you thus court insulting pity, in that your attempted disguise of stoicism is seen through?" Nearing it, I groped for the door, mine eyes were open, but dulled and stupefied into slowness by the mental effort I was making to suppress anger and anguish.

"This is very midsummer madness!" My hands were taken in a strong controlling grasp. "Helen, you will do yourself frightful injury by this hurricane of wrath. Sit down!"

I sat, half-stupefied, in the chair he drew forward. He paced the room angrily. "This is Kilmarnock's doing," he said at length, "but you have learnt your lesson imperfectly, and, by——! you shall unlearn it before you leave this room!"

To this I made no answer: that room, any room was to me but as a dungeon—light, life, love shut out; the dull and stifling breath of despair, of hopelessness to be breathed for all time. What in all the world had I to trust to?—in that stifling silence even mercy's voice seemed to be stilled! None could feel for me. In the wide world, was not one sin or woe so black or so deep as mine! It held and suffocated me.

Into this serene amber hell, lit up by its wax-lights, scented, silken, pleasing to all the senses, peopled by torturers, by the demons of lost love, lost faith, came a rough presence, breaking up a misery that was suffocating:—It was the mastiff Beech, who, pushing open the door, came rough and sympathetic straight to me, putting, unrepulsed and unafraid, his great tawny head on my silken lap, and looking up with brown bloodshot eyes pityingly in my face.

"Oh, my dear!" I said, with a half-exultant sob, like one who meets a friend, in a desert land, "you have not forgotten me!" I put my hands on the thick heavy head caressingly, the extreme tension of misery lightened by this touch of a true friend "You remember Beech?" I looked up at Stuart, who was standing by the opposite side of the hearth.

"Yes, I remember him," said he in some amaze.

Beech, at sound of his voice, turned his sullen eyes on him for an instant, but gave him no sign of friendship or recognition, returning to his rapt gaze at me. I had been so long his friend—soothed so often his hurt feelings at his master's cruelty, understood so well that his sullen fidelity was more than any canine protestation could convey—that Beech expected

his love and affection to be taken upon trust.

Craig came in presently with his collar. "He's no to be roamin' about," said Craig, "Milord left orders till that. Sae, if yer leddyship's dune wi' him, I'll tak' him oot. I've been after him this hoor, indoors an' oot."

"Go with Craig, dear friend," said I coaxingly. No, he would not; his haven found, Beech was not inclined to implicit obedience to his master's commands or wishes.

"Go!" I repeated, trying to lift his heavy head. Beech saw I was not bent on succeeding, and growled.

"Go!" said Stuart, in a tone of such concentrated fury that, accustomed to associate such with a fast following of kicks, the poor ill-used brute rose resignedly and followed Craig from the room.

"I am used worse than a dog!" Stuart was in a whirlwind of passion. "To me you cannot give a kind word, a kind look. You come down with prepared and deliberate cruelty—and, act it as badly as you may, the reality is in your eyes, in your heart; you have prepared a scheme of renunciation against our meeting which shall ensure your own safety; my misery, my love, you trample on, only eager for the wretched goal

safety for your ill-got honours, your ill-won position, your cruel imposture on Sir Burleigh! How dared you, being my mistress, sell yourself into this legal slavery to him, knowing as you did, that where I would have challenged any other man, to him my hands are tied. It is the most iniquitous, devilish plot that ever entered into the human mind. To pit one against the other, my old friendship for him you knew would restrain my claiming you from him. My God! what shall I do? I cannot give you up, nor will not."

"I," said I, rising, "have given you up—not, as you accuse me, for wealth, for position. I could have been content in a cave, in the meanest garret, so it ensured love or kindness from you; but you went without a word, you left me gladly—jesting, doubtless, over your easy country conquest, laughing at the credulity, the vanity of this—this—this *fool*, who had said in her heart: 'He loves me!' You went coldly, carelessly, indifferently, nor chose by a word to lighten the agony you knew yourself inflicting.

"An agony now past, I am happy with Sir Burleigh; and the slight and temporary pique at losing your broken, unvalued toy, you must put up with, for your own sake. This is plain-speaking. For the future, for all time, I am to

you Lady Clifford, the wife of your oldest friend; and your honour is concerned to remember this."

"Not so!" said he. "My prior claim was unknown. I will now publish it. You, devil that you are, shall not succeed in so evading it! My honour is concerned for my friend—he shall not suffer!"

"Do as you will," said I, "you will find both threats and entreaties vain; and a parting with Sir Burleigh will at least spare me from ever again meeting you."

I paused on my way to the door and looked back:—mentally it was a farewell! I should be banished deservedly; I would exile myself, sparing, so far as I could, the pain to Sir Burleigh of pronouncing sentence. They might settle the degree of my guilt at their pleasure: neither could blame the other. I would go, the scapegoat, into the world's wilderness. A hard intolerable anguish, defiance, possessed me. My eyes burned and flamed with fierce wrath, which, seeking in vain for an object, fell on to and scorched my very soul, like the scorpion in its fire-ring, the stings of conscience, of honour, awoke to strike to my heart.

Stuart came forward and, barring my way to the door, fell on his knees, holding my hand.

"Leave me outward respect," said I, "this *trouvère* business, this kneeling on a soft rug is but *un conte amoureux*, the stage-finish to your slight unpitying love!"

"Helen, forgive me! Be reasonable."

"I have forgiven you. I have nothing to forgive."

"Helen, I was a ruffian!"

"That is no matter, sir, I am used to threats."

"And a villain!"

"Do not confess to me! Ah, God! if the lake will only listen to me, it will hear worse than that; then it can avenge itself. The black water looks cruel, I shudder at it; but 'twill not last long. Do not bar my way, I am not afraid to die; tell Sir Burleigh he is free of me, and I am free of life—of misery!"

With that, the yellow hangings, the chairs, the steel mirrors seemed to swim past, dissolving into one dark infinite nothingness. I knew no more save that, recovering for a minute, I passed from unconsciousness to sleep, and some hours passed. Janet had been summoned, and was with me. At length, opening my eyes, strained and aching, they fell on the dull light of a single candle held by Janet, who was regarding me from a distance.

"I pit oot the lave of them,"—she indicated

the girandoles—"for ye were best quiet and in the cool o' the night. Sir Burleigh wad be here, but he's fou; and the ither man-folk are gane to rest. 'Tis the heat o' the weather affects ye."

"I am cold!" I say, shivering. "Is it late?"

"Twel' by clock!" said Janet sleepily—yawning.

"Then get to bed Janet, I am sleepy, and, if you can cover me up, will remain here."

Janet, nothing loth, after folding a blanket round me, left me in the large soft *causeuse* with a cushion for my feet to rest on. The door closing behind her, I awoke, with a weary moan, fully to the misery of my position. It was the dark and solemn hour of midnight—when, by common consent of all mankind, spirits of good, of ill are said to be released to wander on the earth on various missions. No good spirit would come near me! Over the starlit summer-beauty of the park, in the dark deep shade of the massed trees, might be fellest shades at work devising ill! I was not superstitious, yet the hour, the silence, the surroundings unfamiliar to sleep, exerted a weird awakening influence; the flickering glimmer of the candle falling on the sheen of the amber silk—yellow on yellow—dazzled my eyes. I wished Janet had seen and

shut that distant window—the midnight breezes came through it like bodily presences, boldly as though exerting their undoubted right; perhaps they were spirits invisible!

So Sir Burleigh was, as Janet expressed it, *fou*—taken too much port in the heat of argument, or excitement of cards. Well, Craig would attend to him, loosen his clothes, raise his head, and he would on the morrow ride double distance to avert gout, and, returning, confess to me, and d——n number six bin as the cause and the temptation. Number six bin, I reflected, is the tawny beeswing-port: for a man without a strong head to take it were madness; for a man with a strong head, it meant gout and present intoxication. Sir Burleigh ought to be used to it—but had doubtless forgotten its potency for a minute, which was but rarely the case with him. From considering number six bin, I went back, as the curtains waved mysteriously, to the starlight and the spirits—black spirits and white! I thought of Ariel in his cleft tree—of Sycorax —of Caliban—— Ha! what huge shapeless monster is that—that—emerging slowly from beneath a neighbouring sofa, tangled in its fringes, disguised in them? In deepest shadow and through the opposing window, enters

another—light, swift—a grey spirit!——I must be dreaming! Oh, God! protect me! They approach! I am frozen with an unnatural fear—my blood stagnates, my pulses cease to beat, my eyes strain upon the spectres. Fear of death, you are indeed terrific! Is it the sight of death in bodily presence that blanches the cheeks of the dying? What is this death? A minute more, and I had been dead of fear!—as it was, when Beech advanced, growling and showing his teeth from his curled-back lip, the return of life, of reason, brought another agonizing but more material dread! Was he mad? Did midnight see him change mehr wolf-fashion to some demoniacal shape? He still advanced—still growling so low, so terrible a sound in the stillness as to be truly supernatural.

"It is I, Helen!" Stuart came forward into the light. Beech faced him hostilely, his white fangs showing grimly to their roots. "Send that brute away!" said he, in his quick petulant voice, which at once dissolved all midnight apparitions and brought life and its evils back.

"Come here, Beech!" said I faintly, fearing he would spring on this trespasser.

Beech backed to my chair, and sat bolt up-

right beside it—not for a moment ceasing his guard on Stuart, whose hand was on his sword.

"Send him away, I say!" said he angrily. "Am I to be torn to pieces by this vicious brute?"

"He will not touch you," said I, "so long as you stay away from me! He is on guard, don't you see? He always guards me thus, when I am alone."

"You need no guard when I am here, nor will I be threatened with that mongrel." He drew his sword with a flash. Beech sprang back—and, pursued by him, retreated, springing through the open window on to the terrace.

"I will never trust Beech again!" said I, bitterly resenting his cowardice.

"Trust him!" said he. "Why not? Do you take the dog for a fool? He recognises me as your best guard, otherwise I should now be in sorry plight from those fine teeth of his."

"Why are you here?" said he, returning. "I called Janet to you some hours ago, and left you with her watching over you. You are well 'tended, it would seem, when ill, in this gaunt old house! Some uneasy consciousness of this neglect kept me wakeful. I was on the terrace, smoking, with Kilmarnock till late; when he retired I saw, to my surprise, a light burning here, and came in

through the window. Forgive me! I could not guess it was you here—it might have been a robber. Sir Burleigh is drunk—or, as we say in Scotland, fou; he and Lovat defied the port with bad effect."

He seated himself beside me, and took my hand. "Helen," said he, "what is the use of this quarrelling—of these heroics? You have only succeeded in half-killing yourself. I am none the worse, excepting the pain it is to me to see you suffer. You must know my claim to you to be inalienable. I am ready to go to Sir Burleigh and say so with a clear conscience, and maintain it with my sword. A monstrous assertion, moralists would say, on the face of it; yet, if one reflected, a just one, granted you were mine—as you were. How can Sir Burleigh or any other claim you without my leave? It is monstrous and unnatural! We cannot live thus! nor will I live without you! I do not ask you to choose between us—you have no right of choice! nor would I abide an adverse decision! I ask: Will you come away with me quietly, or shall I challenge Sir Burleigh? It would be, of course, inconvenient to do so, but that I suppose must be. To him 'twould seem like ingratitude or treason, for he is unlikely to reason on it, or reflect

that he is the unconscious traitor. As for the Manor, or any material loss, that shall be made up to you—in settlements as secure as ever a Clifford planned! You cannot mean to leave me—cannot, Helen?"

This, the terrible questioning of eyes, of tongue, of trembling hands clasping mine in an agony of apprehension.

"You cannot—'twould be a death-warrant! Could you but realise my suffering since I came!—came to this scene—our first meeting! Give me some hope! Why should my heart be broke to save Sir Burleigh a transient pain? We can go from hence—he cannot but pardon two wretched lovers, whom, unwittingly, he stands between! He will forgive in time, since 'twas but a girl's foolish fear urged her to consent to his protection!—a frightened, soft bird flying to the first friendly hand! What has he to forgive, when all shall be told him?—that he has found a diamond belonging to another, and must restore it! This, I shall tell him," he said resolutely. "'Tis but by chance I am here. Yet I must speak, or my heart break! 'Twas to escape Kilmarnock I came in—he haunts me with ineffectual remonstrance. How can he tell my sufferings?"

This I did not entirely disbelieve. Roaming

about restlessly, it might happen that he entered by chance, seeing an open window, a lighted room; but of what import were such trifles? I scarce listened or attended to his excuse, wondering how it chanced that I listened to him at all. To accusation! To his self-justifying! To this haughty assumption that throughout he had been infallible! I, the one to blame! That now he was the judge, I the criminal!

Wavering and flickering in the light draught from the open window, the light from the candle showed his face. No repentance was there—every lineament expressed only a sense of wrong, a sullen air of injury. "What have I done to you?" I asked, moved by this reading of his face to the irrelevancy of the question.

"Ah, nothing!—nothing!" said he. "Only wrecked my life! Wrung my heart! That, a woman with but half your beauty might have done! But here comes in your wit to aid you! Any executioner can kill! It is not all who can inflict subtle torture!—who can pit friend against friend!—who can trample in the dust the honour of the man who loves her!—for her sport, for caprice—from cruelty!"

"I am not wilful-cruel!" I said with a moan, turning my face from this accusing spirit, whose

pain hurt me. "I was wrong to rail at you, to accuse you! God knows that separation alone will be bitter enough!—is bitter—without harsh words or anger! I do not excuse myself, to accuse you. I—I—try to be just. It was my folly—my guilt! You will now see that! You will forgive me! Leave me the future!—that, in it, I may expiate, so far as I can, the past! Leave Sir Burleigh his faith in you undimmed, his hopes for you unclouded!"

"That," said he, "is very well, but means an utter impossibility, if, as I gather, it conveys: 'Leave us alone! We can settle down comfortably enough! My art is sufficient to ensure peace!' For yourself, possibly; but, Helen, if you imagine for one moment that, because I speak temperately, I am not resolute, fixed in my determination to claim you, you know little indeed of me. You are mine, only mine! These long soft hands, sweet lips! Helen, you could not banish me! Sweet, give up your grievance against me! It only hurts yourself! My conscience is clear! I have done no wrong! nor will be treated as a criminal because, in spite of me, you chose to marry Sir Burleigh. That is not my fault, it is your own crime—even for that I can almost forgive you. Oh, my dear, what sort of wretched creature was that Casimir

of yours, who folded his weak hands, bowed his humble head, and gave up the love of his life, at a word, to another? Assure you, I don't know him. Say, sweet, did you not invent some such umbra and give my name to it? You were lonely! You thought—what? That I had gone away for ever—deserted you. I wish desertion were as easy as you imagine. I would give ten years of my life, now, to be able to leave you. It is impossible! I have suffered enough through this madness of yours! But for this wickedness you might now be in Scotland, my wife. Ay, mine! Is my word nothing worth? Ah, Helen! this is indeed cruelly hard on me. Would to Heaven Sir Burleigh were dead! I could not cross swords with him—he is loyal and true-hearted, and I cannot nor will not give up you for ten thousand friends. You cannot choose between us: you have no right of choice, you are mine? Woman, if you disowned me for no wrong, only that my love for you was constant, you could, after, but class yourself with demons who lure, who tempt, and who destroy! Should I survive, 'twould be with a ruined life, a broken heart. If you have ceased to love me, tell me so now, here!—have so much mercy on me that my misery may be for a while hid in darkness."

He ceased speaking. A solemn hush fell on

all things, the fitful summer-airs from the night outside ceased. The wax-light, unmolested by them, burned straight, distinct. In its light Stuart stood, his face colourless, immovable. He had appealed, nor would not influence the answer. Only in his eyes, which were darkened by pain and dread, could any emotion be discerned. What I then spoke, must be for all time—as the stroke of an axe severing at once life and love. I could not! all the guilt, all the wrong, rushed upon me. I tried to frame, "I have ceased to love you!" My voice died away, returning with the bitter truth in its tremulous tones: "I love you! Oh, Casimir, I cannot help it! I love you!"

Illimitable happiness held me next day. Earth looked beautiful, heaven benign. The blue arch of the sky, the warm and fragrant air, the wide expanse and sylvan loveliness of the park, the oak-glades through whose thick-leaved branches stray sunbeams fell—all seemed part of a felicity not of earth. I walked in the park, avoiding Casimir—yet every thought of him and with him. In Love's musings are no material obstacles. As, in fairyland, a wand waved will cause solid fabrics to crumble, so thought of Casimir caused me to forget Sir Burleigh. This joy—this exultation will be credible only to

those who have loved and suffered. He yet loved me—loved me! Ah, how cruelly had I misjudged him—how harshly acted towards him—how traitorously renounced him! What amends—what reparation, cried Love, can you make, that will condone your crime? What amends for the unjust torture you have inflicted? Then came harsh reason, the executioner of phantasy, spreading a pall over the blue of the sky, the glory of the summer-day, dragging me from fairyland to grim reality,

"What are you doing here, my dear?"

'Twas Sir Burleigh on his morning ride, crashing through the tall ferns to come to me—Sir Burleigh! I shivered as at a douche of icy water. Sir Burleigh, in the soft shades of fairyland!

"Go away!" said I, involuntarily spreading out hands of rejection, the whole scene darkening to me as though physically.

"I am sorry!" said he moodily, dismounting, "but, Nell, it shall not happen again! My dear, you must forgive me; I have been seeking you. Do not avoid me, sweet!"

"Oh!" said I, with heart-breaking sighs, as slowly the whole vision faded and vanished, "Why did you come? Am I never to be happy again?—always—all my life to be in this darkness! Oh, my God! it is too cruel!"

"You take it too much to heart," said he, throwing the cob's reins over a low-hanging oak-bough; and, standing in penitence before me: "Come, my sweet rose, forgive me this time! 'Twas Lovat's fault, truly!"

"What was?" said I dully—anguish invading my heart as the last bright glimpse of love's vision faded.

The ferny brae, the long vista of the oak-boughs, the dewy scented turf, warm air, and summer sheen, all vanished; dull reality closed round me prison-like—a purgatory from which was no escape, which no prayers would lessen, no tears lighten. "Come!" said he impatiently. "Was not you so dainty a dame, you would not be grieved at this. 'Tis not often number six bin and I fall out. As I say, 'twas Lovat, who would toast our friends in Scotland and over the water. Nor, my dear, need you deny forgiveness."

"I!——" I drew back in awakening horror, realities coming back to me from his earnest and grieved glance.

"Helen," he continued half-pleadingly, "I can well understand that to you 'twas most repellent. My dear, I would willingly make you happy; and to see you shrink from me is penance enough for a worse fault!"

"Oh!" said I with a shudder of remembrance,

thinking less of the lost glamour so late present with me, than of its wrong to him. "Do not excuse it to me, I am too unhappy to listen!"

"By——!" said he, "you are the proudest and most haughty woman I have ever met! I defy Casimir, with his Court dames, to point out one who exacts the deference you do. From your own husband, madam, submission might be more kindly met. Must I to my knees and beg your pardon?"

"No," said I miserably, as he took my hands. "Why do you beg pardon of so wicked a wretch as I? Why did you come? I was happy—now all is dark!"

"But I swear you shall not complain of me again!" said he with anxious penitence. "Come, my darling, say you are not yet angry."

"If I am angry, 'tis with myself, sir. What is this sin you so confess to a worse sinner? What is there in the whole world I would not forgive to you—was you and Lovat to drink the cellar dry?"

"I tell you 'twill not be repeated: why do you harp on it?" said he half-angrily.

By this I could scarce forbear a smile, which taking for a free pardon caused him infinite content, and as much expressed gratitude as wrung my heart to think how little 'twas deserved.

Presently he remounted, and I walked beside the cob, listening absently to the penitential exegesis of his last night's excess, which, no doubt truly, he ascribed to Lovat. By degrees the image of Casimir was replaced by that of the faithful and true friend beside me, and, as we paced soberly along in the bright morning, the sweet pernicious dreams faded farther away—dissolved, were half-forgot. Could I hurt or injure Sir Burleigh, whose only fault was loving one unworthy?

"My dear," said he presently, "I will not suffer you to walk farther, nor become tired and worn-out; see that you rest on your return. For me, I must ride double distance or suffer gout. I am glad you have forgiven me, Helen!"

He rode on. I retraced my way, a dull confused pain in my eyes, a noise as of rushing water in my ears. What had I to forgive—I who had not even seen him "fou," yet to whom his first penitent thoughts turned? I wandered homeward, all happiness gone, as it seemed, from my whole life. On my way I met Lord Kilmarnock, out for a morning stroll, and bowed distantly to him, unable to endure the converse of any creature.

He looked somewhat surprised.

"He is," thought I bitterly, "used to good

and gracious women; a dark and wicked life like mine is without his experience." A sob broke from my lips as I hurried on, but my best speed was but slow—the conflict of pain and passion tired me. Soon I was within the Hall, and sat down to rest on the wide staircase.

Presently a light rapid step approached, coming from above: 'twas Casimir.

"Ah!" said he reproachfully, sitting beside me, "so here at last you are to be found! Was it well done to avoid me these long hours?"

"Sir," said I, "I am willing to avoid you altogether. Casimir, this contention will kill me! For you, who owe no duty, break no faith, 'tis easy, this taking up a lost love—to me it is pain and agony. I have just seen Sir Burleigh."

"I will die," said he angrily, "ere that drunken squire shall stand between us! Let port console him, or claret! what has he to do with love? Helen, you are not wretched hypocrite enough to profess you love him more than me? Duty! I will leave you—I will not be tortured. By ——! you have no squireen to deal with, madam!" He rose in sudden wrath, and ere I could speak had gained the door of the Hall, and from my vantage-ground I saw him walk with angry rapid steps into the park. A bitter and chilling sense of loss and desolation stole over me

with his absence. Could he not endure one minute's pain, disappointment, yet calmly doom me to the torture of treachery to Sir Burleigh, my only and constant friend? A sense of bitterness came to me, of comparison between his harsh and hasty judgment and Sir Burleigh's tender patience. Had I pursued this train of thought, the newly-fanned embers of nigh-extinguished love might have waned nearer to annihilation; but that slender chance was denied me. He came back, half-repentant, half-angry, and, sitting beside me, soon conjured away vexation and bitterness.

So sweet was his converse, that the dreams came back which had haunted me in the oak-glade. I told him of the meeting with Sir Burleigh—and, with tears, of his goodness to me.

"Were it not better," said I, miserably, "to leave him?"

"Yes," said he, "I design you shall, but not yet!"

"Oh, you wicked and worthless wretch! You who sit here! Would to God I could help this love for you!"

"You nor no woman on the earth is worth to me the friendship of Sir Burleigh. Yet, to win you from him, was there no other way, I would lay him dead at my feet!"

Thus in disquiet—in alternate reproach and tenderness, affection and avoidance—passion hovered ever nearer, remorse waxed fainter. Like a sleeper soothed by the fanning wings of a vampire-bat, conscience was lulled to a complete surrender. On an occasion of quarrel arising, Stuart manifested so much coldness and avoidance, that I was straitly and sternly questioned by Sir Burleigh as to its cause.

"Remember, madam," said he, "that ceremony needs not to exclude welcome; and in desiring you to use distance and courtesy, cordiality as to an honoured guest was not forbid."

"Would to God he was gone!" thought I from my heart, agonized beyond expression, yet hastily promising to use all these divers means, so content he laid the moods of this unquiet spirit on the uncertainty of his affairs—the harassment of his fortunes. And I toiled on unaided, and unpitied—as was my desert.

"He is wicked," I said once bitterly, hearing of so many perfections in this idol, that I could no longer listen peaceably to his panegyrist.

"What do you mean?" said Sir Burleigh. "I saw you talking to Sergius, who doubtless warned you against him. For Sergius hath a roll-call

of his French conquests—but that is beside the question—the lad is, as are others, in France, neither better nor worse, and Kilmarnock might employ his leisure better than by repeating stories to you: 'tis enough you are a Clifford, and I his friend. 'Wicked' is but theologic jargon. Casimir is a man of honour, which is more to purpose—nor need Sergius' spectral stories scare you from your loyalty and friendship." He spoke austerely, as displeased with the imagined commentary on Stuart, which he after called on to account for every cold word or negligent act towards him. Every day but increased this idolatry of Sir Burleigh, let Stuart be as moody as he might, and conscience and honour at times pinched him. Anxiety at the state of parties in Parliament, the lack of Jacobite favourers in office, Kilmarnock's hardness to him—all were arraigned as the cause, and I bidden to be more cordial in assuring him at least of a warm and respectful welcome at the house of one faithful adherent.

This, so ably seconded by my own feelings, caused me at times so severe remorse that, in despair, I once begged Sir Burleigh to let me go for quiet and rest to the Farm.

"No!" said he, "none here but would miss you. The very sunshine would be gone, was

you away; even Lovat would say so. And, my dear, you look happier of late. 'Tis the interest, the excitement of so grand a movement! Was you not a Jacobite now, with him near, you would be but stone or wood. I have known a whole clan become loyal at sight of him. I do not regard mere words or whims, for all his race are, on the surface, whimsical as women, but with the minds and hearts of heroes and kings. So it is with him. A stranger might misjudge him. His friends know him for tried gold. Therefore, I am the more surprised at your harshness and coldness to him—you, who have so keen a wit, not to see below these surface-faults, caused by pressure of anxious care, the tenth of which would weigh any other to the very dust."

"Why do you blame me?" broke from my trembling lips. "You should bid me avoid him."

"Yes!" said he, "in that Sergius hath possessed you with an ill report of him! and you know not the world enough, to know how men of honour act by each other. As a Clifford you are sacred to him, and, was you a saint in heaven, you could not be safer than as my wife, the wife of his oldest and chiefest friend. You forget, besides, that he sees beauties every day at

Court, and likely thinks you but a wilding rose, though I would not exchange you, Sweet! for a Royal Court full of Beauties!"

"Oh, my dear!" sobbed I, when he had gone, "why do you—you, counsel me to destruction relying on the hollow reed, honour?"

The lovely harvest-weather went on; within as without the Hall, could be no discontents with the glory of so golden sunshine—the warmth and fragrance of so picture-like a summer. Day by day we drifted to nearer companionship—hour by hour it grew harder even to feign an indifference to each other. True, we kept up the ceremonial letter of distance—the courtly bow, the reverential courtesy at meeting or parting, the fine phrases for other ears—an hypocrisy necessary; yet scarce an hypocrisy, since 'twas, with him, but matter of manner, and not of calculation.

Remorse was waning—perchance to revive at no distant date, yet now giving but infrequent and flying visits, to be dispelled by love's eristic reasons.

One glorious golden day we were in the park—the very air still with heat and fragrance. I had a plucked handful of purple thyme in my hand, holding its warm blossoms to my face. It was afternoon. The rest were dis-

persed hither and thither. I inquired where was Kilmarnock.

"Oh!" said Stuart, "he has been daggers-drawn with me ever since our reconcilement. He could bear to see you miserable, and me on the rack, but he is an Augustine rolled in snow—or so flatters himself. Sometimes, however, he strikes me more as a Curtius, willing to throw himself into any gulf of division that may again chance between us. Why do you ask for him so anxiously?"

"For no special reason."

"You think him handsome!" said he, with what I thought a little pretence of jealousy, yet with a lowering brow.

"He is so," said I indifferently.

"For my life, I cannot see it! He has a grave philosophic air; but beware philosophers, if all are like Sergius!" And he was willing, manlike, to tell me some stories of him, to which, being his friend, I would not listen. "He is willing," said he indignantly, "to carry statecraft into domestic policy. Last night, he outstayed me on the terrace! To day I had advice to withdraw unobserved. All to stop my meeting you, whom he constantly counsels me to avoid, for your sake."

"Good counsel, sir! why do you not profit by it?"

"I will in a score of years, sweet! How delightful to be now alone!

'Crabbed age and youth
Cannot live together:
Youth like summer-shine,
Age like wintry weather.'"

"We have two Rubens, entitled 'Youth and Age,'" said I, "the young man in a fur cap; the other showing how he looked when old. Wonderful pictures!"

"We are wonderful pictures, Helen: you in your beauty, your shining eyes and sweet perfect lips; and I in my *bonne-fortune* in being allowed your bedesman your slave." We were standing on the border of the lake, over which the long afternoon sun-rays fell, ourselves sheltered by a huge low-growing oak whose roots were laved by the little dark wavelets which crept on one after another like minutes to the shores of time, hand clasping hand in a rapture of silence of content —when, crashing through the fern of a dell near by, came Kilmarnock, who joined us with as scant ceremony as though he had been welcome. The little flutter of his arrival subsided. I was showing him the beautiful pale blue of the harebells, which grew in fairylike clusters at the foot of the tall ferns near, and, on his calling them purple, I took from my neck a pale silk kerchief of azure.

"See," said I, "allow this to be blue, so must the harebells, only this is massed colour which shows darker by concentrating the light on it."

"You are right," said he, "as ever!"—adding: "If that is your colour, Lady Clifford, let me beg that kerchief—I have nothing to remind me of the Manor, and we shall shortly be going."

I hesitated—Stuart was some paces off, in scornful vexation, dipping his foot in the small ripples as they came to land.

"Take it, then!" said I, as Kilmarnock's eyes grew eager over the trifle. "It is warm enough to dispense with a kerchief."

"And the flowers," said he, hardily securing the silk. "Give me the flowers, too." I saw Stuart look black as night.

"Milord," said he, coming forward and speaking peremptorily, "LadyClifford will think us a couple of coxcombs. I have been begging flowers, but in vain. Let us each gather his own flowers!"

His eyes flashed as he directed an angry glance at Kilmarnock, who, acknowledging his speech by a slight bow, renewed his petition—even more earnestly than before.

"There, then!" said I, giving them with a

smile, "yet you will, I hope, need no such slight memorials of your friends here."

"Is it for your boy's herbarium you are so earnest for these weeds?" said Stuart. "Lady Clifford, milord is the most devoted of parents: his son, Lord Boyd, is very clever —doubtless numbering botany in his muster-roll of knowledge."

"Is he?" said I. "Oh, why have you not his miniature, milord? I love clever boys. Could you not lend him to us in the vacation?"

"Yes," said Stuart, "or, if he is not to spare, lend another of the half-dozen. Now, Sergius, you have come all this way for something. To have your children praised will please you."

"Yes," said he, with a bitter smile. "I wish Boyd were here; his company might amuse Lady Clifford—it would, at any rate, be harmless."

Stuart smiled scornfully, saying:

"There is a proper exposition of our national trait—our patriarchal spirit. If we wander from home, it is with a backward glance of yearning to our flocks and herds, a regret that we did not drive them all before us, that, on pitching our tent, we should be welcome, and in congenial company."

"A very proper spirit for a father," I sug-

gested. "Would it not be heartless to feel content at leaving those we loved?"

"Not when we can resume our feelings at the point we broke off at," said Sergius, "coming out, as doth a snake, in a complete new skin, glistening as the one we cast."

"Hallo!" said Stuart, laughing. "You, milord, are a bad teacher for a bachelor."

"Are there such men?"

"Yes," said Sergius, steadily regarding him. "But, under correction, sir, bachelor is a term only used once a year in Scotland, when maids choose their sweethearts on Valentine's eve."

"You are very learned in such lore!" I laughed.

"Is he not?" said Stuart. "Sergius is a philosopher—nothing is beneath his study. Now, it is a custom drawn from remote ages—now a couple of butterflies—"

"Or a moth hovering round a consuming flame," said he; "but that is so cruel a sight that, natural or not, I must rescue it."

"If you can," was the reply, carelessly given.

"Now, milord, having profited by your wisdom, we are anxious, as disciples are ever, to set up on our own account. Lady Clifford, will you extend your walk? We are wasting Kilmarnock's time."

He touched his cap to him; and, taking my hand, walked on.

"Did ever," said he, "man preach as Sergius doth? 'Snake and flame!' I would he would remember in what a glass house he himself lives. Women think him handsome, and, to those who favour theological wooing, he must be irresistible. Ha! ha! sweet little moth!"

I did not feel mirthful at having hurt and offended Sergius. In my mind I was casting about for some means of reparation. He meant well and kindly to me, and, though his friendship took this protecting form, it was sincere, only I was unworthy of it. The evening drew on, and we returned from our walk, not allowing too much time for preparing for dinner.

"Helen!" said Sir Burleigh, as he washed his hands, "of course, I am glad that every attention should be paid to Casimir, but next time he wants a stroll, unless Sergius be of the party, excuse yourself from going. I do not distrust him—far from it. It is just his haughty unconsidering way, to select a companion who pleases him for the moment. Sergius, however, I am certain, thinks he is inattentive to business, and it might alienate the whole of them to see him trifling time away. So cast about how you may, without offending him, still treating him

with every respect, avoid his company too much."

"Here," thought I, "are troubled waters! He will not be avoided," but I promised.

* * * * * *

"Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes."

Thus I thought of Kilmarnock, who had of late seemed sad and austre, and who was, at the present, my companion in an after-dinner walk on the terrace. After a while I repeated the line to him, timorously.

"By heavens, no!" said he, with so much energy that I started. "Lady Clifford, if I am angry 'tis not with you, nor never could be. Foes!—God forbid! My dear, I have much to render me grave. Forgive me that my manner has caused you to think me unfriendly. There is no one, not excepting even my own, in whom I take a kinder interest, to whom I feel more true regard." He took my hand and raised it to his lips. "We part soon," said he, so sorrowfully that I smiled.

"Shall we, then, never meet again, milord?"

"Nay!" said he, "never is a long day, Lady Clifford. Nor would you credit how much I shall feel the parting from the Manor—from you. I know not why in life we have always to part with those in whom we take interest,

whilst we daily meet scores for whom we care not at all." His tone betrayed an emotion far stronger than his words—a feeling they rendered but coldly.

"Why not then care for all alike indifferently?" I said, striving to remove his melancholy, and, to prove that such could be the case, I gave him a rose I wore, which he carefully and like a beau fribble fastened in his coat, laughing now and joyous. Then we fell to talking politics, and he assured me he was hopefuller for the cause than he had been for a long time—that the Cavalier had committed all home moves to his son, "who," said he, "is, despite some failings, a good soldier, and no contemptible statesman." With this he stole a glance at me, and I looked away for very pleasure at hearing him praised; my heart confirming a thousand times what he said, and my soul longing to see him crowned with laurel at once, and publicly worshipped as a hero.

"Sweet musk-rose!" said Kilmarnock, carefully addressing the rose in his coat, at which I laughed, and told him I, as its suzerain and sovereign, claimed tribute too.

"Ah!" said he, "truth will prevail. I meant it for you, and will add to my obliging memory of your goodness—that you was not offended."

"Sergius!" I said, in amused astonishment, "I had thought you not to care for flowers or frippery till to-day!"

"Then were you mistaken," said he, offended, "and thought me a fool! By ——!" he continued, in a great passion, "I have sacrificed enough for the cause not to be made a laughing-stock of; and I know who does it too, and calls me Saint Augustine, and other d——able names! He shall take his share of the saint-ship, by ——! for I'll not do it all."

"Hush!" said I earnestly, "he loves you with all his heart. Cannot you forgive a little levity in a younger man?—even brothers jest, but without that malice you suppose! Oh!" I continued, "I shall indeed be unhappy if you cease to be his friend, or mine. What have I unhappily done to offend and displease you? I am unskilled in entertaining men of rank, and looked only to the goodness of your heart in treating you as a friend."

"That," said he sullenly, "is all beside the question. You are courtesy's self, and, were it otherwise, what my master is content with is too good for me, but on other grounds we meet as men. Nor will I be his butt, nor any man's. See how he treated me to day."

"Be assured," I said, seeing his Scotch pride

was hurt, though unreasonably, "that it is not so—do not doubt my sincerity, nor his love for you. Why do you try to make me miserable?"

"I was a peevish fool," quoth he, recovering his serenity. "Pardon me, I am the better for your ladyship's goodness in listening to me where most would have chid or laughed at so groundless complaints. Do not disesteem me for them, or refuse me your further friendship."

"No," said I, sighing, "count me your firm friend, but, for heaven's sake, do not add trials to those I already endure by dividing counsels."

"I will not," said he earnestly, upon which promise we clasped hands and parted.

* * * * * *

"A pretty scene!" said Stuart, when I told him how nearly he had risked Kilmarnock's affection by his jesting behaviour to him.

"I saw it, and, by ——! I was coming to tell you I'll have no roses given to Sergius or any other man—nor no consolation for what I choose to do. You are simpler than a child to think he meant a word of it. He gulled you throughout, and I'll go to his apartment before I sleep to-night and ask him how he dare. Roses, indeed! I'll wager he told you you was a rose, or you'd not take his part."

"Sir," said I, "would you forbid the man to speak the truth?"

"D——n truth!" said he, "I won't have you spoke to at all by any of them, and Kilmarnock shall account to me for his infamous conduct. Ay, before he sleeps to-night. Let him keep his distance, as do Lovat and the rest. Friendship is a proper pretence. The rest are my friends as well as he. Do they give you roses and carry complaints of me? It is certain if everybody had as little of the saint in them as Sergius, they would do."

"That is it!" said I. "Assure him he is a sinner, and he will cry content!"

"I will not," said he in a fury. "Of all the pragmatic devils and—and saints, he is the worst."

Then, this motley character of his friend making me smile, he presently consented to be pacified on my undertaking to have no more conference with this hybrid than courtesy demanded—or than could well be avoided; and next day we all met on the same terms—but that Stuart was cold to Kilmarnock, who was ice to him, yet seemed under it to be grieved and distressed at the alienation, which would, I knew, be but temporary. So the pleasant summer-days sped on.

"What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?"

sang Spenser, and, though no butterfly, the truth holds good of other some.

Sir Burleigh soon withdrew his prohibition against Stuart. "He looks dull," said he, "he is used to women's society, and you are too rigid in avoiding him. Remember who he is. I will have every respect paid him." So soon reversing his judgment, he seemed to see no fault in Stuart, who contrived this change of opinion, I felt sure, by degrees claiming my society almost as a right, but with such apparent coldness that none could remark on it adversely as to its manner.

In which course I was persuaded that Kilmarnock was constrained to agree, through what arguments I know not, and to second him either from friendship or policy, finding interference vain and useless. I even felt assured of one thing, which was that, in his political zeal, he would have offered as holocaust all the maids, wives, and widows in the kingdom, rather than risk any end of policy he wished his friend and master to pursue.

At first I had thought better of Sergius, and, at first, I honestly believed he deserved it, and tried his best to befriend both, but divided counsels were not in his line. No man so truly

saw the inutility of trying to serve two masters, besides which, whatever promises Stuart made to me on the matter, I am very sure he must have bitterly reproached his friend for his interference, which from that very time slacked perceptibly to me ; but seemed outwardly the same to the rest, which, as I before said, was but policy in him.

Sometimes, indeed, I would, unaware, catch his eyes fixed upon me with a grieved aspect, as though he would fain take up with admonition again in spite of its distresses to himself. Then I would take up with Lovat, who had no sort of scruples at all about anything, and was wrinkled and amusing to the last degree, and told me stories of the Courts, both of the King *de jure* and him *de facto*, in both of which he seemed to have friends and correspondents, and in one of which he assumed I should presently, with Sir Burleigh, take a high place.

So gracefully did he contrive to insinuate that both he and others noted their master's friendship for us, that I almost doubted his observing any particularity in it ; perhaps he did not, but set it all down to Stuart's natural impetuosity, and my art in leading him on in Sir Burleigh's interest. However this may be, he was a mighty favourite with my husband, whom he engaged both in politics, wine, and cards, to rather a

greater degree than I liked, as he was but rarely away from him.

Never king had a better set of courtiers than those assembled on our Manor, nor was less regardful of them, and more bent on his own will and pleasure. He, I am convinced, watched me as keenly when with Lovat as formerly with Sergius, and grew day by day more exact and unreasonable. Yet was his diskindness, in their regard, sweet—for it evidenced the present intensity of his love, of which now neither doubt nor fear possessed me.

Ah! those happy days when we do not fear the devil, but take the sweet gifts he offers with both hands, and think the fairy gold will last for aye and ever! So it was then: all seemed sweet, calm, and peaceful as the rapids above the torrent's fall, when the still glassy water lulls us on its bosom, nearly to sleep, with its smoothness and gliding, and we think cataracts have been slandered in their qualities, and torrents libelled in their nature.

Now the last of their many days' stay drew near, and consultations, plans, and projects more frequently took Stuart from me perforce, for freely as each would talk with me of all that passed, it was not to be expected I should be one of their meeting.

One morning lingering in the picture-gallery, hearing the distant hum of voices from the study and thinking them all repaired thither, I was surprised by Kilmarnock's entrance, with his hat on, his face flushed, and an angry glitter in his eyes.

"Go down," said he, with an oath, "and stop those fools from suicide: they are for persuading Sir Burleigh to swear all his tenants to Jacobitism now, in this county, and, after dallying in the sunshine, wish to conjure a storm from a clear sky—you can guess how much chance there is of fish without bait, ay, and plenty of it, and men don't run their lives on to Government pikes without strong persuasion and good reason rendered."

"They are not really for it," said I, alarmed, knowing how little popular the Cliffords were, and how much their local prestige required material aid to help it out, in which case only would it count as a powerful factor.

"Do you argue with me?" he said harshly, "are you content to be beggared for him, without, by ——! doing him any good in return? And what of your husband, madam—the best though perhaps the blindest in the world?"

"Sir," I said, "his blindness is not total, and I will take no insulting words from you."

"Beseech you," said he frantically, "go, and stop this midsummer madness—ere it end in ruin for us all."

"Stay here," said I, "and doubt not I will break up their counsels though Jove were there himself."

In effect I sent Janet to tell Sir Burleigh I was ill, and he came as swiftly to the drawing-room, and with more discomposure than the lie warranted, or I as its object deserved.

"It is but a small matter," I said as he took my hand, "and did not, I trust, break in on any serious business."

"Had it done so," he replied, "you are my first care."

"Then," said I, embracing him, "stay with me awhile, for it is little we meet now, and business can defer till night, I am truly ill-at-ease enough to warrant this of you."

So, thought I, much displeased with myself for this deception, am I truly a Delilah, but only to save and not destroy this Samson?

To sit there with my arms about his neck, was to win by degrees all the subject of the council, with which, neither dissenting nor agreeing, I contrived to displease him and finally to win him to think it as rash as it undoubtedly was.

"Sir there overvalues me," said Sir Burleigh with complacency, "and it is a good fault in a friend, but, as you say, precipitancy will but injure, not advance the matter, and twenty good followers discreetly raised will do more than a mob of unconsidering idlers who will shout one day for him, and the next for Hanover."

"Don't talk too much politics," I said, "stopping him at the arc of the circle, lest his reasoning should complete the revolution and end where it began, "I am tired of them." When will these men go, and leave us alone ? Those were happy days when we were alone."

Sir Burleigh made an unrecordable reply, for I care not to set down folly—yet seemed happy enough now, and not much inclined to return to his guests, whom presently we heard disperse.

I soon found myself better, and much comforted, and Sir Burleigh, with much self-complacency, would listen to no apologies for my summoning him, and attributed my speedy cure to the miraculous effect of his presence and caresses, which was in truth the case.

The worst of it was, I was forced to be absent from dinner that night, and after to appear cloaked and shawled on the Terrace, invalid fashion, with Sir Burleigh on duty and Lord Lovat as the only relief, of whom presently

tiring, I sent both away, and beckoned Kilmarnock, who came briskly forward and stood hat in hand before me.

"Sit down," said I, as harshly almost as he had spoken to me, and then for awhile I would tell him nothing.

"Milord," I said, presently beginning—

"Nay," he interrupted, "if I am to be treated to my title, I will protest! I have not deserved it, nor will not stand it."

I was silent again; then, reflecting what unconsidered trifles will send a Scotchman beside himself, recommenced more kindly.

"Sergius, you will see I took your counsel, though it was unkindly tendered and I called you to thank you for it—believe me, I am truly grateful: it was complete madness on all sides."

"What I can for you, without prejudice to my master's interests, that I will always gladly do," said he, still sullen.

Then relenting, he expressed as much sympathy for my supposed indisposition as though he truly credited it, which, I believe, he did—men being incredible credulous in some things, and my absence at dinner giving ground and colour to it.

In common gratitude to him I could no less than be kind and friendly once more, and he forgot our late coldness and distance, and talked

in so earnest and animated a strain that I had till then no thought that he was either so clever or so agreeable a man. Perhaps he exerted himself to make amends for his angry words in the morning, which, knowing they meant little or nothing, I was not inclined to resent, and the stars, coming out by myriads in the purple summer night, saw us still sitting there. And, on his expressing a wish to that effect, I undertook to be his guide to the pictures next day.

"Sir John Cutler (says some learned historiographer) had a pair of black worsted stockings, which his maid darned so often with silk that they became at last a pair of silk stockings." This Stuart quoted angrily to me by way of apologue on becoming acquainted with my having agreed to show the pictures to Kilmarnock.

"He is in a bad way now," said he, "and presently will fancy himself your lover. I do not choose that you should see him alone, neither will I suffer myself to seem suspicious. Therefore include Lovat in your party."

"Sir," said I, "am I to have no separate volition, but be for ever guided by your whims? I will not include Lovat, which would be to discredit Sergius, from whom I have received so much friendship and such consideration that it would be well if you could equal, as you will

never excel it." And, so saying, I turned and looked back on him from the first landing of the great staircase where we had met.

Much evil is certainly in our nature, and rebellion springs full-armed from it. I truly cared not though fifty Lovats were of the party, but having promised Kilmarnock, and hoping to hear from him somewhat more fully of their plans, I would not, at anyone's bidding, go from my purpose.

I was besides piqued at his causeless jealousy, and held that his faith was faltering and weak, both in my ability and good-government.

The picture-gallery was open to any of the guests who might choose to enter at any time. It was wide, sunny, and silent, and the faint fragrance of its cedar-lined walls made it one of the pleasantest places in the house as the morning sun came in unchecked through its long range of windows, and the beautiful pictures made a mute society in which one felt lifted away from care. Presently, whilst examining a Correggio, Kilmarnock came in, looking less like a self-conscious pretender than a brisk man of business—clean-shaved and with a freshly-powdered wig, a brown coat with but little embroidery on it, and one of the buckles of his shoes awry.

"But for that," said I, looking at it, "you might have stepped out of a frame here."

He retired a step or two, and made a true courtly bow, his hat touching the ground.

"Lady Clifford," said he, "will be the beauty of the house for all time."

"Thank you," I replied smiling. "But what do you say to this lovely St. Catherine? Can any mere earthly charm convey so reverent a feeling to one's heart?"

"Yours can," said he, "and does. And, in truth,'twas not of the pictures I came to talk, but of you. I cannot aid these dead-and-gone folk, but to you I hope to be of use—though," said he, in his teeth, "'twill be done Judas-like. You know," he continued, offering his hand as we paced the gallery from end to end, "that in desperate undertakings one may well be willing to sacrifice oneself, and even one's friends. But the interest I can but feel in you renders me as unwilling you should suffer as were you my sister or my daughter.

"I will not pretend that the thought of Sir Burleigh risking all he has, in what I and himself believe the cause of right, weighs with me at all. Others risk their all. Why not he? But I cannot in my heart desire you to fall from your estate.

"Therefore induce him to forswear Jacobitism as 'tis called, or limit his aid to untraceable money, which, I may truly say, will be of almost as great use as his name. Nay, I will not lie: every good name is of almost inestimable value, yet I will make it up by other ways of which I wot; and feeling you safe will inspire me with double zeal."

"You are but too good," I reply, hanging my head humbly, "and I love Sir Burleigh truly, but such honour as I have is concerned in your success. Therefore put me out of your count, for humbly grateful as I feel for your goodness, I would die by inches of the disgrace of desertion now. Not," I continued, as his brow darkened, "that I put into this count any—any—personal feeling, but so I ever felt in a question between interest and honour. More I need not say, save that I would thank you kneeling—and do in my heart for the sacrifice you were willing to make for me."

He was for coldly withdrawing his hand, but I clasped it in both mine, and besought his pardon with tears in my eyes, begging his most lenient construction for my folly in putting aside his counsel.

He looked thoughtful for awhile; then said he, abruptly: "Though I only desire your welfare and

wealth, yet I were a devil and no man if I liked you not the better for your choice."

And so ended our inspection of the pictures.

"If you have need of devils," saith a modern writer, "draw them out of Milton's Paradise." I needed not to cast a drag-net or a seine into any fanciful source to supply me just then. What he imaged or fancied of my relations with Kilmarnock was enough for Stuart to convert him into a whole legion, reigned over by a sullenness, there was no dispelling, because none outward sign of it appeared to any but me.

I made no concession, as that in such cases is to own to wrong, and add fuel to fire; yet so rank a passion of jealousy would have moved me to mirth in another, I felt that in him it was a madness he could not altogether control by reason or reflection.

Thus exceeding sorry for him, as a mother for a wayward child, yet would I not concede him a right to his suspect, for, as the French say, to excuse is to accuse. Therefore, let him lie under this self-imposed bane till he tired of it, and his reason returned clothed with love. He avoided me, appointing Lovat as his caretaker, and casting basilisk glances whenever none but I could meet them, which had slain me outright had their intention been fulfilled.

Kilmarnock, to whom he was specially civil and obliging, seemed a little puzzled at the manifest avoidance of each other, but, concluding it was none of his business, was very cheerful with his master, which moved me to pity him, as I knew he was so heaping up wrath against himself in the mind of this pale, lank-haired Othello, and inspired me after two days' uncomfort to make it up for Sergius' sake.

"Sir," I said, stopping him perforce in the study, whither, as I went in, he was retreating, "I am no Nessus. Take off that poisonous garment you have fitted on me. If you knew its painfulness and agony, you would not let it burn into my heart."

He wavered for a moment, and was for denying knowledge of my meaning. Mortification, anger, disdain, bitter hate, swept over his face. Then, as I stood calm and stedfast, neither pleading for pity nor pardon, but for justice, his right mind returned, and love, the more eager for its long truancy, came humbly back.

In what terms he excused himself, needs not to write, as his humility satisfied me; and here I may say there is no serviceabler virtue than humbleness, nor none that so disarms even just wrath; therefore, I entirely forgave him, and even loved him the better for his sufferings.

compassionating them as we compassionate the self-inflicted wounds of a maniac, and comforting him for his endurance of them, till he was almost happy enough to make a precedent of this folly; and, whereas before all his obligingness had been, so to say, a smile outward from the teeth, now the whole best part of his nature radiated from within in such a variety of pleasing arts, that, all his council were in love with him as well as I, and especially Kilmarnock, whom he now freely forgave, and acquitted from all his suspicions. Lovat, being willing to take up or resign any rôle his master put upon him at any time or in any way, gracefully quitted his attendance on my movements, and waited on Sir Burleigh as before; while I, all unversed though I was in courtly ethics or courtier-like conduct, could not but admire the well-hid art with which he acted—a preference for each by turns—and trembled to think, should the time ever come when I had rivals, how much I should hate that old dissembler.

Feeling the thrill of my hand in his, Stuart wanted to know my thought.

"Why," I said, "it was of rivals, and how I, who had no art, should hide the pain I felt if he cared more for another than myself."

"That," said he, "though impossible to happen

is truly womanlike. You hedge yourselves in with precautions against possible pain, and let us take our chance, or rather certainty, of its infliction."

"But we are more tender," said I, with a shiver, "and I, at least, would die of a rival."

"Die of a rose, in aromatic pain," he laughed. "Must I be civil to no woman but you?"

"Not in my sight," quoth I, "or, at least, I will be here and not see it, or 'twould kill me."

"Now," said he, "I will tell you a secret, and whenever or wherever my triumph over Hanover takes place, be it in London or Edinburgh, there Sir Burleigh has promised to come, and to bring you."

This, spoken with sober certainty, sounded mournfully to me, who rather hoped for than believed in his triumph. But I could not, raven-like, dash his anticipations with my own doubts, as, with eyes lit up and in some excitement, he told me their various plans, most of which I had before from Sergius, and to all I listened with respectful attention, making no commentary aloud, but noting the weak points, as they seemed to me, for further consideration, and to ask of them of Kilmarnock.

The day had been sultry, lowering, and gloomy, with an intense and oppressive heat; and, as we

sat at dinner with all the windows open, now and again a cool air came in, herald of a coming night-storm, then left us again more heated than before. Yet the normal glow of talk went on, and the drinking of wine nowise slackened. It was, I think, in a moment's pause, an electrical silence which held us all, that the first of the stored thunder burst over our heads, preceded by a lightning-flash which seemed to swallow up the light from the wax-candles. After that, the peals were continuous and awful, but as yet brought no rain. Dinner being hastily ended, we all crowded to the study, where the men hastened, by bringing out the cards, to dissipate the terrors of the storm; and Sir Burleigh bid me stay with them, as 'twas too lonely for me elsewhere—in which kindness they all concurred, Kilmarnock offering to play chess with me whilst the others were at whist. We had set our men, when Stuart, excusing himself from the whist, which was not yet begun, bid Sergius take his place, "As," said he, "'tis selfish to keep Sergius from tricks," at which the other men smiled to each other, and Kilmarnock, with a low bow, thanked him for his consideration. "For himself," whispered Lovat—not so low but that I heard him—thinking him more cunning and wrinkled than ever. However, as

he was not to be thwarted, being the chief of the company, I had no choice but to seem agreeable to the change (as I was), and presently all were so deeply engaged in their play, that ours, which went on but slowly, and by fits and starts, in pauses of long whispering conversation, which the noise made by the card-players rendered inconspicuous, was scarce concluded by the end of the first rubber.

"Checkmated," he said, "by you, Helen; but what wonder?—for I let you."

"Oho!" said I, "that is but a poor excuse for want of skill to beat me, but I'll allow that thunder is a disturbing element."

"And doubtless you are the winner," said he, "when all stakes are paid."

"Then," said I, rising to retire, for the wine was being brought in by Craig, after which they grew noisy, "I am to count it my chief gain that, like Dogberry in the play, I have had losses?"

"Take all my loves," said he, "and if you count that loss I am in a poor way, for it is my all."

Courtesying to the company, who all rose to bow, Stuart held the door for me, and at parting kissed my hand. Something sad and pleading in his glance fixed my regard, and on rising in the

morning I found that they had all gone, and Craig and Janet were busily effacing all sign of there having been guests—restoring the rooms to their original state, and, unknowing of the bitter pain at my heart at parting, congratulating me on having freedom and leisure ; whilst I crawled, in the damp left by the storm, up and down the terrace like a slug on which salt has been thrown, shivering with pain and grief and misery, ill in body and mind, and but little able to bear up against sorrow—so swift does the mind react on the frame.

While drinking my coffee, Sir Burleigh came in, and M'Causland with him. Both seemed grave and preoccupied, and took little note of me, appearing to have some rather complicated money-matters to settle, on ending which M'Causland invited me to come back with him to the Farm for the day.

"Yes, go," said Sir Burleigh, something sternly and absently, as he counted the money.

"My dear," he said presently, looking up, "Verney returns to-day, and 'tis better just now that you should not be worried by him. Let me meet him alone, and bring him to his senses. Besides, Lovat and the rest have been too much for you—you look tired and weary."

"Lovat," said Mr. M'Causland, "ay, e'en

the wrinkled old carle wi' craft an' cunning in every fold of skin, like a serpent, and to my mind poison too, for friend an' foe—— "

" Let alone ! " said Sir Burleigh, " he is my friend, and as yet I know no harm of him ; there are such men in every cause, on the winning side."

" Where, I doubtna, he will always remain," said my uncle. "And," said he, as we went farmwards, " granted the power from above, there would be few women Jacobites. 'Tis the fair face and white hands wins them."

" It is not," I say indignantly, " and his hands are brown and strong as yours. I hate a man with useless paws like a lap-dog, if such exist in the world."

" Eh ! my leddy, we'll forget our quiet lass presently, if ye speak so."

" Nay," I say gently, " I shall always be your lass, nor will not defend anyone you dislike."

" I have no mislikin' for the young man," said he, " and, to speak truth, wish him well— But why are ye weeping, Helen? Are they not good to ye yonder? "

" Yes," I say with difficulty, " very good— good enough—but it's not like the old days when I had only you and Sir Burleigh to please, and could tease Verney Clifford and laugh at

poor Sandy. I was a cruel wretch in those days, and it has come home to me bitterly."

"Well," said he, "life is change: we cannot stand still, but must on with the tide. Yet ye have not a far cry to a home, an' a welcome should ever ye need one. The necessity which took ye frae me may e'en float ye back, Helen. Ebb and flow is the same tide, my dear. An' ye shall ne'er meet with less than love an' kindness from me, let others value ye as they may."

By this we were entering the farm-door, Elsie and Elizabeth pressing forward with officiously kind welcome, the more flattering that I was no favourite. Perchance absence like death qualifies for promotion, and the large eyes and thin face that met me in the mirror every day may have looked sad or strange to them.

A feeling of despondence came over my mind as I went into the familiar parlour. M'Causland's tide simile sounded ominous. How from the fulness of my new life could I float back to the minutiæ of this—from a broad river to a still lagoon; from which the butterflies and dragonets of youth had now for ever disappeared, and the purple iris of hope grew no more—only the never-ending reminder, forget-me-not, beautiful in itself, bitter as a memory, flourishing?

"Now," said M'Causland cheerfully, "we will have dinner almost at once. Ye look half-starved an' unhappy. I doubt yere despondency is caused by the want of gude farm-fare an' nourishing victual, such as ye used to have."

Ay, thought I, as he went out to hurry the dinner, Euripides was right:—

> "The wise man's only Jupiter is this:
> To eat and drink during his little day,
> And give himself no care."

Listening to the busy movements without, I mused how few moments in our allotted span are worth living. Yet, when the well-cooked country-fare came in, I was ready to re-echo the Cyclops' speech on the wisdom of eating. We had a well-roasted peahen, followed by cream and raspberries, both of the freshest. The soft summer-air coming in from distant hayfields, fanning back to me some feeling of youth which at the Manor always seemed strangely absent, I would, thought I, that I could close my eyes, and then, awaking again, find myself at home here, to be for ever "only Helen Rohan," the late past forgotten.

"It's likely ye have been sitting up late?" said M'Causland, mixing some whiskey and water.

"No," said I, "they played cards mostly till near morning, but I was never there till last

night, when I went in—any port in a storm, you know."

"Ay, an' a storm it was, Helen. All the witches an' warlocks in the country abroad, nae doubt, to mischief travellers."

I shivered, even superstition was attacking me now, and, had he detailed a witch springing up behind the flying horsemen, I must have concluded her to have singled out Stuart for harm and hurt.

But, sipping his whiskey, he began upon money-matters, bidding me ask Sir Burleigh for a settlement. "It's not that he will ever grudge ye even to eat gold and siller, Helen—but—but cases occur; an' lives are but human. In short, this Jacobite business makes it imperative ye should be secured, anchored to some provision—let who will float out to sea in a tub in search of a Stuart."

"Do you think it is so hopeless then?" I asked.

"Not to say hopeless, but impossible," he replied. "Anyhow, what was yours, wad be Sir Burleigh's in case of the warst. An' it's none all for you I'm planning, an' me known him this forty year forby, since he was aughteen—your age, Helen—a fine handsome fellow, as tall an' proper as Sandy, but aye headstrong. He is cocksure of the Stuarts winning, so will, if they

lose, lose all—if he can even save his life. That he may, but, anyhow, a good hantle invest in France wad do for ye baith. He tauld me," he said forgettingly, "to ask ye hoo much ye wad like settled on you, an' whatever 'twas I was to keep it for ye at a safe distance, baith frae Guelph an' Stuart. That is why he sent ye with me, Helen."

"Is it?" said I, enlightened. "I thought he was very earnest for my coming, but I will have nothing: all the risks he runs, so will I."

"Then ye are not for Hanover, milady?"

"No, uncle I am not; nor do I want to be safe if others are in danger. I will share it, let it be what peril it may."

"Hear to that!" said he. "There ye sit like a child, dipping fruit in cream, an' talking o' civil strife as though 'twas a' done by peltry o' roses. Hoo now wad ye look if a troop o' King George's men came here an' dragged me and Sir Burleigh off to prison for Jacobites? Wad ye sit still an' starve—or go a begging—or hang on till Verney Clifford, if even he was no confiscate? It is easy to grind wi' water running by—but, dry up the stream, stop the siller, an' milady is worse off than a girl at a mop-hiring. She canna dig—to beg she is ashamed." Sir Burleigh's heart wad be twice rived—ance for

himself—ance for ye—wanderin' about homeless, starving. 'Tis not the present that wants guardin', 'tis the future. Not our green crops, but our harvest. So consent, like a wise woman, to take what is, after all, but your due; and I will so invest it in France as that ye will be safe, an' bread for ye sure."

"I don't know how much to ask," said I, "take two thousand pounds. That I am sure he can easily spare. Take that, and let me alone. I could not live if Stuart lost—or Sir Burleigh. Nor I would not."

"It behoves caution," said he ruminating. "For if it became known that either house or land was bought there for the Cliffords, it would go ill with their chances here of clearin' themselves with the Government, but I will manage it some how—for all sakes. I hae a cousin trades to Dunkerque—hm! I must e'en think it oot my ain way, Helen, and manage it shall be so that neither Lion nor Onehorn shall pit their paws ontill it—win which may. Was I a man with a handsome wife, I wad be for the wee German lairdie."

"Why," said I indifferently, "does loyalty depend on the beauty of your wife?"

"Sometimes," said he caustically, "but not always, it wad seem."

Then ensued a long pause, broken by the crackling and dropping of the wood-fire. It seemed a hundred years since I lived here—since Sandy used to come in and out, watching me, sullen and wordless, or getting angered over the Cliffords. I saw all the old scenes re-enact themselves as the long shadows of the afternoon crept on.

McCausland was thinking too, deeply and, I could see, painfully; sometimes he would essay to speak, then check himself and look away.

Fearing he had some bad news of Alexis, which he wished, yet did not like, to communicate, I asked him what was troubling him.

"Why," said he, "to tell God's truth, 'tis o' the Jacobites I was thinking. Helen 'tis doubtless a lie, yet 'tis said one o' them is ower-special to ye, an' I am the more given to credit it that Sir Burleigh looks troubled of late. Not to credit ill of you, my dear, but of him, Helen, they are a' flichtin' flichterin', gallants, a' the younger anes, brought up wi' French fashions, amang Moabite women."

What else he said swam by me in a stream of sound, as my shamed face bent downward. I saw the fire only through a mist of tears. All this was too cruel. Why was he not brought

to judgment, arraigned at a domestic tribunal, racked by these familiar and beloved judges?

"I hate him!" said I at length sincerely enough. "Do not speak so to me; it is Sir Burleigh who should, if he is angry. Why do you ask me here only to grieve and vex me?"

"Hoot!" said he, "grieve an' vex ye, ye minx, to tell ye to keep that Hieland cateran at a safe rood awa'. It's no the seventh command wad fright him frae his prey. All brought up in the lap o' Babylon as they are; an', but ye are warned, hoo should ye know? The flatteries of the great are poison—ay, strong poison."

"Have they ever flattered you?" I asked, thinking how remarkably free from that alloy was our friendship, love, liaison—call it what you will.

"Whiles Sir Burleigh has,for my stewardship," he responded, "but that's not it, Helen—I have heard that his eyes follow you as no honest man's would—your every movement; that he haunts you like an ill-shadow, an' I doubt, but I saw him, I would e'en lay my riding-switch over his boy's shoulders for him, an' bid him to keep to his ain parish, the Jacobite losel!"

"Yes," said I, "that is all very fine, but, until you see him, how can you say what you would do? He is away—and now leave talking of him."

Yet, hardily as I spoke, tears again stole unbidden into my eyes, my heart sank, my hands trembled. What a mean and false wretch am I become! thought I, and it had been less pain to have gone on my knees and confessed all, than to sit thus uttering evasions worse than falsehood, glossing over treachery with pretended anger. I rose and went to the table, where stood the white china-dish of raspberries in their rough leaves. I took one up with the tips of my fingers, and saw it grow to giant dimensions through the magnifying tears in my eyes, which presently splashed down, one becoming absorbed in the table-cover, the other breaking on the edge of the plate into a thousand invisible atoms. Though I noted all this, the pain at my heart was intense.

"I will go upstairs," I said but half-articulately, and waiting for no response I went to my old room, opening the door softly, as though my entrance was unauthorised and someone might challenge it.

What a change was there! It wrought an immediate revulsion of my feelings, perhaps that their acute pain could not be sustained, and this was but a relief to the overcharged heart.

A last-year's nest, it was indeed. The Perse rugs were rolled up and standing in one corner,

the polished floor was scratched with nailed boots; some of McCausland's tractates, covered with dust, on the oak table ; the bed, all the plenishing rolled into symmetrical bolsters, was covered with a sheet, which in its turn was brown with dust; some old whips and a very old coat were in one corner; the book, "Religious Courtship," on the hearthstone, flat on its face, with several pages doubled down ; and the window, the bolt of it rusty with disuse, refused to open, accounting for a mouldy, mildewy atmosphere ; while, to crown all dignities, Elsie was storing feathers there, in a linen sack, which, escaping by handfuls, gave it the aspect of a birds' battlefield. Wrenching open the window by main-strength, these began whirling about in the draught thus caused, and, going too near the perpendicularly-placed rugs, they fell at my feet, disturbed by the vibration of my tread, as though imploring rescue from their disgraceful inaction.

"It is too bad," I say, all my grief and bitterness turning to wrath at this unnecessary chaos. "I will have it redde up and see to it"—and, going down, found Sir Burleigh below.

"Well," said he, "are you ready to come home, Helen?"

"In a few minutes, sir.—Uncle, I want you upstairs a minute."

"Eh?" said he, rising, "what is it now?"

"It is disgraceful," said I, rapidly preceding him, "I will not have my room left thus. If Elizabeth and Elsie cannot make it trim, I will myself bring a broom from the Hall and do it. See here, and here," pointing to the different dilapidations, "everything disused—spoiled."

"Aweel, it shall be seen to," he replied, more amused than penitent, and Sir Burleigh, who had followed, laughed as he picked up the book, carrying it to the window. "It shall be seen to," repeated M'Causland, retreating from the draught and returning downstairs.

"Plague on the feathers!" said I, stamping with vexation as they flew into my face, and, taking the bag, I, half for spite, half for mischief, emptied them out into the air, which was clouded with their erratic flight hither and thither.

"What, Helen!—turned termagant?" said Sir Burleigh, laughing, "angry at your nest being so used? But, my dear, you don't consider my broadcloth. See, I really begin to look like an angel—feathers all over me; they stick too, by George!"

"I am sorry," said I, repenting, as his broad shoulders became flecked with floating down. "I will pick them all off before we go. I own

I am angry that this pretty room is used thus. I meant, when you turned me out of doors, to return hither."

He did not answer—busied in brushing off the feathers from his coat. I did not look up for a minute.

When I at length did so he was regarding me with an angry scowl—a brow black as night.

I looked at him in amazement; he raised his hand almost as though to strike me, but seized me by the shoulder as in a grasp of iron.

"Whose is this writing?" said he, between his teeth, pointing to a slip of paper between the leaves of the book.

It was Stuart's. My eyes seemed stretched as though to breaking, till each letter stood out in the straggling uneven scrawl—left forgotten in this book.

"Forgive me," it said, "do not leave me alone with unhappy thoughts. I love you; did I not, were you not so dear to me. The minutes you are away are hours.

"Your repentant, loving prisoner,

"CASIMIR."

"He was here," said a voice, faint and trembling, which sounded to my ears as from a distance—"here. The dragoons were after him. It was life or death. I hid him here."

Sir Burleigh shook and trembled with passion —his teeth, locked rigidly, showed beneath his drawn-back lips like those of a lion. I thought he would kill me, and, with one sob of intense fear, stood still.

"Hide yourself here for ever! You shall never come out alive."

Whose husky, savage tones were those? I staggered from a swift, powerful push, falling with a jarring blow on to my knees on the roll of carpet, else must my knees have broke—and, taking out the key, he fixed it in the lock outside, locking me in.

I felt that I was dying. I could not rise from my knees; every limb was powerless, as well from fear as the exhaustion of the shock. "Let me die!" said I in agony, praying to what or whom I knew not. "Let me die now—I am tired, hated, beaten. Sir Burleigh has struck me." That seemed to me crueller than all the rest; everything, wrong or right, past or present, resolved itself into that one agony—that he could hate me, strike me to the ground. How long a time lapsed I could not tell. It seemed that it must be evening; outward things grew dark, my limbs rigid and in an agony of dull pain, yet no volition was in them. Many more shades of darkness fell—the coolness of the

summer-night came in, torturing me like the cold of an arctic winter, for my teeth chattered already with the cold induced by this paralysis. I could not even fall down—stiff and rigid now almost as stone. Should I turn to stone—to anything so this pain would go—to dust, to corruption—oh! what did I care, in that physical agony, for my sins? I felt fiercely that, to escape it, I would commit ten thousand crimes—every muscle, every sinew was twisted with agonizing cramp. I could not even scream to relieve the pain—all my powers with all their might were at work on this dumb torture. From cold as ice I seemed to turn to fire, yet to remain equally helpless. It grew yet darker; all the length of the impending night flashed upon me, and a faint and hollow moan answered the remainder.

The door opened. Sir Burleigh came in, yet, though a horrible dread swept over me, I could not speak or move.

"Say you repent!"—his voice came low and angry.

A fierce anguish answered him—not my mind but my tortured frame.

"I am in torment, lift me up."

"No, by ——! if that is your spirit. Say you repent!"

"I am in torment, lift me."

Apparently struck by this singular iteration, he stooped and took my hand, trying to raise me, but in vain—had I truly stiffened to stone?

"My God!" said he, "what is the matter with you?"

"Lift me!" I moaned.

Exerting all his great strength, he half-raised me at length, doubtless half from dread of what it might be, lowering me again to my knees. Again he essayed, and, this time the cramp demon wavering, I was not so stone a weight, though the pain, vibrating now in rapid strokes, was even more terrible. I moaned incessantly, as a prisoner under the lash, for some time unable to speak.

"I was fixed," said I at length, faintly, "and got cramped and could not move. Is hell like that, I wonder?"

"Hush my dear!" said he. "Cramp is, I know, terrible; yet, now, it will soon pass. It is just while the muscles are twisted, is the intense pain."

"Go now," said I; "I want to sleep. I am worn out," and, crawling into the bed, despite its dusty cover, I no sooner laid my head on the pillow than, in utter exhaustion, I slept, careless—so that present oblivion, present rest, were mine—what the future held in store—nor, in

fact, thinking at all. It was, in truth, unconsciousness such as seizes on a prisoner released from the rack. How long it lasted I do not know, but I awoke with the dazzle of a candle, held near my face, the puffy and stertorous breathing of amazed Elizabeth, who, being sent upstairs to await on my awaking, thought fit thus to fulfil her task and satisfy her curiosity at once.

"What ails ye?" she asked. "Sir Burleigh is down below, main angry, tellin' M'Causland ye threw handfuls o' loose feathers o'er him; an', indeed, Elsie says they are stickin' to his coat, an' will e'en gie Craig an hour's wark to clear it. Did he gie ye a buffet for it?"

Elizabeth's notions of conjugal amenities had carried her into the conjectural I had thrown feathers over Sir Burleigh, and he had shown his distaste for practical pleasantries by knocking me down.

I laughed, and, rising, with her help, shook off all I could of the down settled on myself.

"Elizabeth," said I, "this room is in a most untidy litter. See that it is redde up in every respect as it used to be, and I will give you a crown to spend at the next mop."

"I will, milady," she said stolidly, pleased.

"Leave the candle and go." She obeyed—

laying out the crown in anticipation on ribbons —careless of our quarrels.

What shall I do? thought I, gloom and misery returning with solitude. I cannot go down and face the anger of those two—must I pass the rest of my life here? I did not mean to be a criminal—to be wicked. I would tell my sorrow, my repentance to Sir Burleigh, and then steal away into the night, to outer darkness—like the reprobate spirits, banished for ever. Sobs choked me at thought of parting thus: I loved him. What should I do, who, all my life, had seen him every day? Should his familiar figure become lost to my life — is kind voice be replaced by an eternal silence?

I had on but a summer-gown, yet imaged myself fleeing, through the star-lit darkness, on and on for ever. I would take a last look at them both, sitting, as of old, by the hearth—as spirits, ere their final banishment, are allowed a farewell to a distant friend, who, otherwise, would not know of their parting.

I went downstairs, weighed down with dull grief, resolved to look my last, and then leave them to peace for evermore, free of me and my sins—my sorrow.

The parlour was unlit save by the dull glow of a log on the hearth. Sir Burleigh was

standing, M'Causland seated. He had been speaking.

"What d——d nonsense you are talking!" It was Sir Burleigh speaking now, in a lowered voice. "What end would that answer? Keep your hell-fire doctrine for farm-hinds. I shall take her back. Yes, now—yes, with me! Crimes! Pretty judges we are to set up a tribunal! Helen is everything to me now. A thousand crimes, as you call them, would make no difference. Punish her! How, pray? To my mind the punishment would be the crime. Leave her with you?—bring her to a proper state of mind? That I am very likely to do! to have her return to me in a state of submissive idiocy, crammed with theological terrors. No, talking is idle. I would not change her though all the women in the world stood a-row to be chose from. I should never find another Helen Rohan—better or worse. What would that mean to me, when all my heart is for her?"

"Aweel! Sir Burleigh, if ye maun profit by guidin'—by Scripture——"

"Scripture," said Sir Burleigh impatiently, "was writ for Jews! I am a Christian, I hope. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth—that's Hebrew. A Rohan for a Clifford—that's plain English and fair and square good sense. So now listen! I

hope my wife wants none of your manage, and you are to hold your peace. After all, it is but surmise—most likely false. Casimir wrote to her—that's true enough—but, mind you, before I married her. Young men will be young men, but he is honour itself, and my friend."

"A devil for women," moaned M'Causland.

"As to that," said his master, "so was I. Look at Verney too, Blount, and even your own nephew—brought up on texts—he enlists as a soldier, to get away and be free awhile."

"Poor Sandy!"

"Pshaw!" said Sir Burleigh. "If you think you can preach men into milksops, you can think of him. So now that's settled. We will be going. I'm afraid I frightened Helen; I'll fetch her down.

"That is to draw iniquity with a cord," said solemnly M'Causland, as he lit a candle and handed it to his master.

As he moved to reascend the stairs, I went slowly up again, this time to Alexis' garret, half unknowing whither I was going. I heard him search and call in earnest and distressed tones; then return downstairs, coming back again, accompanied by M'Causland.

"There," said he in anger, "see what you've done! She has gone—God knows where—

frightened. Searching here is useless. She will be miles away—perhaps dead. And we talking about forgiving—settling about sins, like a couple of archangels. There, my candle is out; go relight it. Helen, are you there? My dear, come to me, wherever you are."

"I am afraid," I sighed from the far end of the garret, where, indistinctly visible by my white dress, I stood by the window.

"Afraid," said he, as M'Causland returned with the light, "of what, my sweet darling? My—madam, must I break my neck down those d——d steps, while you coquette with me? By —! if you don't come I will drag you out by the hair of your head. What d'ye mean by hiding in a garret and giving me gout looking for you, eh?"

"Now, my darling,"—he entered the garret cautiously, afraid of the shadowy lumber striking his feet—"come, I am not angry with you. So you can go, M'Causland. You thought I meant hurting you?"

"No," said I drearily, "I thought I deserved it."

"And worse than that, eh? That reminds me of a man I knew at college, a quiet, cynical fellow, who would listen when scandalous stories were afloat, and always wind them up with 'And worse than that.'

"Now, sweet, what is worse than wasting time? We have a journey to go. Come, Helen, why are you weeping?"

"I am tired," I say peevishly, "and thinking of that man whose life I saved, who leaves me the blame. Tell me, would you have given him over to Colonel Blount and the soldiers?"

"No," said he, "I would have hidden him in this garret, as he told me you did; and here is the very loose plank he described, where he crawled under of a daytime. Kilmarnock told me how you let him in—to plan the escape; he was struck by this garret too. So never mind Casimir's scribble—all young men write poetry to pretty girls. It only vexed me at first, coming upon me suddenly, but you was not milady then. Now, Casimir, who is a good fellow, will know better than write such things, and if not, we must take order to teach him. Now forget it. There's M'Causland frantic, so we will back to our own ditch, and leave him leisure to recover. But for Kilmarnock's being here with him at night, I own, Helen, I know that of Casimir would. In short, 'twas as well milord was not here alone. I had it all from Sergius, every most minute particular, even to the dry scones and whiskey you gave them to

eat and drink, and how resentful you was when Casimir offered to kiss you at parting."

Lost in astonishment at this revelation, I rose and prepared to accompany Sir Burleigh, and through the long homeward way, listening to his talk under the summer-stars, I was debating the knotty question: "If all men are liars, which of these three is the greatest?" finally acquitting Sir Burleigh, and fixing the palm on Sergius, otherwise Lord Kilmarnock.

I should before have stated, but that this personal matter engrossed me, that Verney's return was a false alarm, and the hasty stampede of the party at the Manor unnecessary on that account.

It was in fact as I suspected, a device of Kilmarnock's to get Stuart away, lest he should hopelessly estrange Sir Burleigh, who, he knew, would not easily forgive any behaviour on his part which should reflect dishonour upon him—open and apparent to the world.

That such was not mere surmise on my part, the subjoined letter, received from Kilmarnock, will show. 'Twas brought by a runner—one of those half-savage mountain-youths of whom he had told me they had store at their several posting places—caterans who had cunning enough to fulfil an errand faithfully for their employers,

and reticence to render even a rack employed on them, to extort their secret, useless; not specially from devotion to their masters, but from that invincible Scotch stubbornness which has furnished so many Gaelic names to the muster-roll of martyrs, both religious and political. This was given into my own hands by the runner:—

"To Dame Helen Clifford, of Burleigh Manor, greeting.

"DEAR LADY CLIFFORD,

"This, written by my master's order, from a little hostelry on our road, will inform you, more particularly than perhaps you will otherwise gather, of our reason for a hasty flight that to you may seem unaccountable.

"In the first place, we heard that Lord Clifford, who you are aware is no friend but a dangerous enemy to us, was posting down by an unusual route to surprise us. This, *I myself* discredited, but was moved to seem to give it credence, in order to move our magnet from the lodestone. In truth you must well know what *this* means. Therefore, I hurried to get our convoy under weigh, and we went off through a country nearly under water—so could ride but slowly, and some of us sighingly, along; in

these latter, include your present writer, for pleasanter days than those so lately passed are rare with me, and indeed with us all, and, but for Lovat, who is equally content everywhere, we should have formed but a mournful party—indeed, anyone meeting us as we splashed silently along, might have imaged us as being a brain-phantasm formed from a watery moonbeam. I believe there were tears in S.'s eyes, and know there was in mine. Lovat, I cannot answer for, our B., as they rode in advance, but every soft gentle wind, every peep of the moon on the lonely fields, brought, to at least my mind, the image of the sweetest creature I have ever met, viz., you.

"Oh! my dear Dame Helen, was you yet to be won! I cannot forget you, nor do not wonder that it was a hard parting for him. I remember me of that first night I ever saw you, when I felt impatient of your influence, and what I thought his folly, with what meekness you replied to my churlish counsel, which was all for him; and you, who had saved his life, put forth no plea for yourself, when he mounted and rode away, coldly it seemed and silently, for the occasion and the person.

"But I may now tell you that I had hard efforts and great work to keep him from writing

to you, to his own danger, and 'twas only the promise of this our late visit that kept him in anywise from running infinite risks to see you, for his movements are of importance incredible to us. I tell you this now, to right so far as may be what must (I now know) have been a cruel grief to you, to think that he, for whom you had risked so much, had been indifferent at parting. Had I known then how much wisdom was joined to so charming a presence, I might have been juster, but fear ever makes us violent, in partizanship as in all else.

"'Sergius,' you will say, 'is discursive.' So, dear Helen, I am. I love to talk to you even on paper, to think of those sweet lips answering though but in words. Yet I love you only as a brother, knowing—ah, miserable me!—that others come before me for any greater claim, and I am but a humble, poor wretch—a slave, waiting the reward only of a word, a smile. 'Now,' say you with a pretty gravity, 'milord, let us take a turn on the terrace, and so to business.' Nell, so far our move has been profitable. We met our post, the same who will bring you this, coming along like a water-kelpie, about twenty miles from here. He turned with us and waited to fetch this on to you, refreshing meanwhile at my cost. France is more favourable now. Louis likes

what is reported to him of the dash and daring of S's moves of late. I am afraid the old Eagle might not so greatly think of them, if he knew the irresistible temptation; but that is a detail, all he hears of is the making his headquarters in an English ancestral home, and gaining so many adherents of weight; therefore he will, with very little reservation, soon grant us every aid. However, this side must be ready first. It will not do to have the sparks fall on a wet blanket. No, our powder must be spread, and the first explosion strike terror into the hearts of our opponents. Many besides, now wavering between interest and inclination, will then cross the Rubicon and join us.

"I am with this writing briefly to Sir Burleigh. Induce him in all our interests to burn all letters as soon as mastered, and do you the same, for murder would be too much grace for me from Stuart if he knew I writ to you also."

"Here," quoth I, "is a slip, for at the first he protests it is by his master's order he writes to me. Sergius is, it is clear, no saint; but, then, but few men are, and women also seem little better.

"Ha! an enclosure pinned to it! The large writing of Stuart!"

"TO HELEN.

"Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all,
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
No love, my love, that thou may'st true love call,
All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.—C.E.

"Ah! was you as miserable, dear, as I am at our parting? No miserabler being lived than me that night. Thought I, 'Again she will think me cold—regardless of her.' But, Helen, remember only what is good in me, little enough I misdoubt, but all yours. God bless you. I will come again the instant I am free to do so, and count the hours endless till then. Think of me as loving you every second; but now wretcheder than a banished man as I am. Sergius is writing to Sir Burleigh, and sends this with it, by a special messenger.—With ten thousand loves, dear, yours, S."

After reading this many times and mastering it, I returned to finish Kilmarnock's daring letter to me:—

"For," wrote he, "murder would be too much grace for me if Stuart knew it.

"And therefore entreat you not to mention it to him, for I feel it well to keep you advised of all that goes on, writing solely as a friend. We post on to Scotland to-night, and from Leith on to France—so much is to be done and in so

short a time, that, have you any preparations to make, I wish you to know there is no time to be lost. After our talk in the picture-gallery I will not again venture to strongly urge upon you all you will lose—enough, if you would reconsider it; or at all events take such measures as that you may be not poor exiles. My heart mislikes me to see fragile womankind enduring hardship, and of that even you will allow the cause would not benefit. Think over this.

"God bless you! is the prayer of

"Your ladyship's humble friend,

"SERGIUS.

"Burn this when read, entreat you."

Up and down the picture-gallery I paced, having concealed both letters in my bosom. The warm morning-sun shone in on me. The fragrance of the cedar-panelled walls, the beauty of the pictured faces, the grandeur and silence of the house, the love of my husband, the thought that by giving up dreams and ambitions which were beyond my power to grasp, by battling with a love now unlawful, by exerting common sense to grasp and hold realities instead of risking all in a cause so doubtful of good as the ultimate triumph of Stuart would be, even if achieved, at the cost of bloodshed and disaster to

so many. All these, and a legion more thoughts, came to me in my slow walk. Why should I, who could influence him otherwise, allow Sir Burleigh to go on quite unchecked in a course which might lose him his life, which would almost certainly lose him his estate, which brought a thousand dangers on his head? Why, in the name of reason, should I do this, all for the sake of unseating one king chosen by the people to seat another whose ancestors had been driven out for a thousand acts of malfaisance, for ten thousand crimes against good-government, for treachery, for folly, for— Here I stopped in my reflections, as a melancholy Titian face, long and oval, with deep eyes, caught my attention by a singular general resemblance to Stuart. I shivered, as though caught by him in these thoughts, and reproached for desertion by that eloquent look.

"Have not you," it seemed to say, "been forgiven? Why then will you harden our heart to me? Alone, in danger, in extremity, trying to regain my rights the acts of my father cannot deprive me of—how know you I may not redeem the past, having endured so much, purified by suffering, by hardship?"

Gladly as my reason would have turned to him in this appeal, it could not. So, as the sun-rays

made a halo round the dark Titian, love for him, o'ermastering reason, stole back to my heart, disarming all my hostile thoughts, and making my allegiance, with me, a matter of life. It is well enough to talk of plucking up affections. Such as may be so plucked up are mere fancied growths. This was a subtle poison mingling with my blood. Only in the stillness of death could my heart cease to pant at thought of him, as the Scripture hart for the water-brooks. Was it wicked?—so might Hecla be, but who could find it out? Time even would not modify it, change convert it, cruelty change, nor desertion impair. It was love strong as death.

Knitting in hand, in the warm, fragrant gallery, it might have seemed, to any philosophising on the theory of love as opposed to its practice, that I was a mere weaver of those fine webs of garish thought with which idleness, youth, and solitude love to embellish life. But in pain and self-humiliation I felt that I might not suffer myself to clothe Stuart in the rainbow-hues of first-love. He had not the tinct and grace of any great heroism. He had faults apparent to all the world, nor not relieved by any special high-mindedness or even extraordinary talent. Kilmarnock was a far abler man, true. So was it that the "youth," by Rubens, which hung next

to the Titian, had fresher hues and better looks; yet, given to choose, I should not pause to take the Titian though it had a catalogue of faults and the other had been perfect.

Take, instanced I as reason arraigned my love —take a fairest child, well matured, beautiful as the day, and of incomparable parts, and offer to a mother to exchange it for her fractious, peevish brat of little or no appearance or abilities, and no promise even of future excellence, though tempted, may be, at first, yet how many relentings would she discover to her own, how many palliations of its faults, how much hope in its future?

Nay, she would say, in the playbook-words, "It is a poor thing—but mine own!" and so hug it to her heart, prizing it the more for the passing regret at its disqualifications. How could I then be wiser than nature made me to be?—my best wisdom being foolishness which I could not defend or justify.

Interrupting these musings, which were both sweet and sour, came a smooth voice which I knew, and a quick step to seek me; a hand, by turns ready to save or slay me, grasped mine—Verney Clifford had returned.

He looked white and dissipated, his new periwig, which he only wore for state, was on

one side; his hands not over-clean, which I remarked to him on his seizing my white knitting to free mine from it.

"We are getting mighty grand!" quoth he, with a laugh. "Our poor kinsmen would do well to keep their distance. But that I had known you, madam, as a farm-wench, I should think you some great lady from Court."

"Think what you please," said I, indifferently. "Does Sir Burleigh know you are arrived?"

"No," said he, uneasily, "I never in my life used the ceremony of apprising him of my movements. Do you desire I should in future do so?"

"No," said I, "your friends desire no better than that you should please yourself; and the Manor is your home, not your inn."

"How good of your dameship to remind me of my disabilites!" quoth he, bitterly.

"Why will you quarrel?" said I, "I am doing you no wrong, yet your first words and looks are bitter as hate."

"What else than hate," said he, "can I feel for your usurping presence; were it you alone, old feelings might gladly suffer you—but in the near future—" Here he glanced at me, staying his words.

I felt sorry for him—angry with myself.

"Tigra," said I, appealingly, "can I help it? Let it displeasure you ever so greatly, I hate myself, I loathe the Manor—it is yours, and you may have it, for any my hindering, I do not seek to part you from your uncle. Why should I? we are friends of a lifetime, yet for every paltry occasion you endeavour after my hurt and unhappiness—not now only, but always. What have I done to anger you, to provoke so much wrath and bitterness?"

"What have you left undone?" said he turning disdainfully away. "There I retort, my son will vail to yours, my inheritance be diverted to a beggar's brat, the Cliffords dishonoured by a misalliance! Ask yourself if you could not, in my place, think the same or worse."

"It would be hard for you were it as you say," I answerd, "but it is not, I may not live, my son may die, and, after all, why will you fight with me? You always have to give in, do so at once." I took one of his dirty, half-reluctant hands, and he laughed. "Tigra," I said, "do you truly wish me dead?"

"No," said he brusquely, "but I wish your brat dead."

"Then," said I, "kill it when it comes in your way; meanwhile, put off your grievous aspect and tell me where is Fernie?"

"She," said he, "confound her! is like you, and therefore must needs stay in town with some sluts or other who have persuaded her they will care for her, so there she is lapped up in lavender."

"I am glad of it," say I, sighing, "for her sake."

"Never fear," said Verney cheerfully, "we will do well by you, and when you are humble, which is but rarely, no one can gainsay you."

"Therefore," said I, "humility doth not become me, for it would be a sort of self-seeking which I despise."

"Back again!" Sir Burleigh entered, greeting Verney heartily, for he loved him, "Glad your wife is left behind. How d'ye think of Helen? Looks well?"

"Well enough for you," said milord souring, "but not for me, sir."

"Well, well," said Sir Burleigh laughing, "don't cry sour grapes yet awhile. I am very glad you're returned. Come down to dinner. I've been everywhere this morning, while milady here was sunning herself. I'm main hungry and tired. Come, Helen."

I took Verney's dirty hand to lead me downstairs, Sir Burleigh following, admiring milord's meekness and docility, unweeting of the fight

that had preceded it. He made no enquires after the absent Fernie, seeming glad of her not having returned, and we had some very excellent stewed carp and saddle of mutton, so tender that I ate like an ogre, and Verney did the same, remarking that one got nothing but kickshaws in town. Then, when after dinner Sir Burleigh dozed, I took my work to the terrace, and, sitting in the sun, suffered milord to amuse me with the talk of the town, and to read to me from a play-book he had brought back in his coat-pocket.

"Verney," said I at length during silence, "your manners are more modish than they used to be. I suppose in town they put you in the mill to polish—or is it your wife?"

"Neither," said he, "'tis the gaming-tables, for, if one swears, one loses."

"And, going from little to great," I say, "the same holds good in company."

"Yes," said he. "There, the women teach us deceit, and that smooths all."

"And is," I say, "what Socrates described beauty to be—a soft, smooth, slippery thing, which soon ensnares us."

"I'm never ensnared, not even by Fernie," he replied. "The only women I care for are play-actors, and they only because they are so damned sly—that is why I like you."

"Well," said I, "if one is damned for slyness, it should be the best of its kind, and of some use."

After which he fell to describing adventures of his, some of which were sufficiently amusing, and proved that, even amongst London wits, his shrewdness and causticity held its own. I did not at once enquire of Blount's affair—resolved to let him tell it in his own way, and without pressure. Yet I was very curious to know how it had fallen out, for that he had not suffered was evident. Perhaps he had evaded it, except that he was no poltroon or coward. After talking away the golden afternoon, milord, lulled by the sound of his own voice, grew sleepy, and, leaning back against the terrace-wall, dozed off, his wig more and more slipping to one side, whence, in pity at his grotesque appearance, I took it bodily off, and carried it into the study. Sir Burleigh was there all alone, like the sleeping beauty of the woods, and I, prince-like, awoke him with a kiss, for he had slept enough; and Janet, bringing in a dish of tea and some muffins, helped still more to rouse him. We had nearly concluded this repast when Verney joined us, declining the tea on account of headache, and asking for coffee. Then he clapped hands to his head, missing his wig, and, going

out to look for it, when his back was to the window I dropped it out, and had the amusement of hearing him swear at his own purblindness which would not let him see a thing he must have walked over, and so, setting it on straight, he re-entered. The coffee had not come, and, apparently tired of talking, he was taciturn and silent. Sir Burleigh smoking, I knitting. The level sunrays came in, gilding us all. I thought we should make a strange picture, framed, just as we sat. The silence grew intense; each was thinking deeply. Craig came in, lit the candles, and put out a card-table. Then milord rose, and moodily challenged his uncle to cribbage, who accepting it, I withdrew and sat on the stairs facing the sunset, and imaging out lovely scenes wherein others took part, of which I could only be ever a wistful spectator.

From these idle speculations, I was roused by seeing my old acquaintance Bill Stovel pass the door, apparently looking out for some less dignified entrance. I went down and called to him to return. "I'm main glad to see you," he said. "Seeing that Sandy M'Causland used to keep varmints, I ha' here brought ye a dormouse."

"Thank you," I said, taking the soft little creature tenderly, and stroking its beautiful tawny coat. "What lovely black eyes it has, Bill."

"Yaas," said Bill, with his habitual drawl, "a ferret is usefuller, but they bites. Feed un on nuts and a sup o' sweet milk, and let un sleep all day," counselled Bill, "in a bed in some dark place."

"Now," I enquired, "can I give you anything?"

"No," said Bill, and then as at an afterthought he produced from his hatband a dirty scrawled note. "Give this," said he, "to Verney Clifford; he'll be main mad to get it, for he's nigh killed the man who wrote it."

Without another word, and with the briefest possible nod, Bill turned and departed, leaving me on the steps, a mouse in one hand and a blood-stained missive in the other, which, being open, I read without much scruple. "If," it ran, "you would not kill me, will you send the surgeon you promised, also some clean shirts? My shirt sticks in the wound and is stiff; also, I get no attention here—the woman is a drunken bitch, and the man came in too tired to keep awake. I lay and thought over it all, and, Verney, by ——! I promise you, if I recover without your aid, I will kill you; so send at once to Dipcote, without fail.—Tyrone Blount."

"Dipcote," thought I, recalling the hamlet, "is a dozen miles from here. It has but the ruins of

a church and a few huts. I will not give this note to Clifford, but will send Janet over with some help at once—that is, if she will go." Janet in the subterranean kitchen, was sitting by the fire, her arms crossed, her thoughts wandering, probably to her absent son.

"Janet," said I, "suppose Dick were dying!"

"But he is na, that I ken," said Janet, with composure.

"Well then, leave supposing. There is a man dying at Dipcote, and, if you have not a heart of stone, you will go to him, seeing I am not able."

"And is there none but Milady Clifford and me to go wanderin' the haill countraside nursing the sick?" said Janet sullenly.

"Now," said I, Spartan-like, for the dormouse was biting me and I was unwilling she should see it, "here is the case. Milord has half-killed Colonel Blount, who is lying at Dipcote, and sends here for help. Who is likely to help him, if we don't?"

"Eh, well!" said Janet, "I never yet knew a servant's word to stop a Clifford's whim. If he is dying, it behoves the man who put him there to attend him."

"He did promise to send a surgeon," said I, "and see how gay he has been all day, while

this wretch's life-blood, for all he knew, was telling itself out. Now go, Janet, or I will."

"You," said Janet, "would do very well by a wounded man. I'd pity Sir Burleigh. I must have the cart out, and drive myself."

"Very well," I agreed, "take linen, he is of a size with Sir Burleigh; and take some wine."

"Shall I cart him back here?" said Janet.

"Yes," said I resolutely, knowing that Sir Burleigh would deny none of my orders. "If he can be moved bring him here. Clifford has wronged and robbed him. Why should he murder him too? Here is room enough!"

Janet by this had on her woollen mutch, and, bidding her wait, I went to a linen-press and fetched a couple of Sir Burleigh's shirts, a few handkerchiefs, and some lint, with which I despatched her. Then I called Sir Burleigh.

"Sir," I said, when I had my arms about his neck, "there is a poor wounded wretch at Dipcote—a King's officer. I have sent for him here, and called you to forgive me."

"A King's officer!" he said uneasily. "Who is he?"

"Nay," said I "whoever he may be, would you have him die at Dipcote for want of help? But he has been half-murdered by Verney; so it is our province to aid him now."

"Ay," said he, "then it is that villain Blount. Nay, you should not have done this, Helen. He hunted after Stuart's life sword in hand. Why should we spare him? I am displeased with you. Why not have asked me first?"

I withdrew from him, grievously mortified by the rebuke, which conveyed, besides, so great a wish for revenge on a helpless wretch as I did not think harboured with Sir Burleigh.

"Whatever he has done," I said at length, "he is now in peril of life, and it is not yet too late to stop Janet, whom I despatched to see to him. Send Craig over and manage the family murders amongst you. I will not further interfere. Suppose it had been you," and here I could no more words for tears—not for Blount's sake, but for being chid, which I could take better from anyone than Sir Burleigh.

"Then, by ——! I will send Craig," said he, "one cannot blow hot and cold—love Stuart and save his enemies." And he went out in a rage to seek out Craig, whom he presently despatched.

I took the dormouse, now quiet and sleepy, upstairs with me, making it a nest in a japanned shaving-box, where it immediately dozed off. As I watched its soft little curled-up form, it seemed crueller than ever that, bad as Blount

was, he should be at the mercy of a drunken woman and indifferent man too tired to attend on him. Besides, to have a King's officer in the house was no despicable policy to still suspicions. And yet, again, he had some sparks of honour, for which one could but respect him.

He did right to fight with Verney, who seemed to have escaped scatheless—due, no doubt, to Blount's fury, or to some skilfully-uttered taunt which shook his undisciplined soul—some reference to the cause of the duel, some fuel flung on the fire of his anguish and humiliation. It was not that I loved Stuart less, but I should have despised him had I thought him capable of a small and safe vengeance on an enemy now wounded and helpless. "Yet," thought I, leaning out of the window to watch the uprising of the new moon, with one attendant star, through the amber afterglow of sunset—"Yet," Sir Burleigh was doubtless right, and I must not, in future, be so bold as to act without his sanction." Just then I heard him call me from below, and, going down, I found him more peaceable inclined, but not willing to discuss Blount on any terms.

Verney, being tired, had gone to bed. He had been very dissipated of late, 'twas too evident by his pallor. So we were alone. Sir Burleigh was writing, and I sat by and helped him to

spell, so he got on pretty rapidly for him. He said he was writing to Kilmarnock, to whom, at the end, I desired my respects and humble duty. What the letter was about I neither knew nor cared, being for the moment more wrapped up in the scrawled note from Dipcote and the thought of Blount's helplessness. Was Janet arrived there? Had Craig overtaken her? What would Blount think of my message and its countermand, an impolitic one for everybody? After an hour or so I began to doze wearily. Sir Burleigh's unaccustomed pen scratched on with plodding patience. His was indeed devotion. No Royalist cavalier of old, with plumed hat and point-lace ruffles, ever worked harder in a cause than he over that long despatch-like letter. It was at length finished, sealed, and safely locked away for sending, when we heard the jolting of a cart on the turf, coming slowly up to the house.

"Come," said Sir Burleigh, seizing my arm, "if ever man had wilfuller wife, I should like to know where he is. Come and see this precious King's officer. Eh, then I let Craig bring him. Well, yes, but only for your prayer. I don't care a straw whether he dies or no, for my own part. However, here he is, I believe."

We went out, and I was right glad I had sent for him. No surgeon was needed to show that he

was in extremity. All his robust boldness, all his ruddy colour gone. As Sir Burleigh and Craig lifted him from the cart, I saw that the straw on which he had lain was bloodstained. They carried him into a room at the back of the hall, a room full of old furniture, rods, guns, and nets, and there laid him on the floor, while Janet, grumbling all the way, went upstairs and brought down a bed and mattress, these being disposed in a corner with a stout blanket below him for lifting him in. He was placed thereon, and I withdrew, while Craig, who had a good knowledge of simple sort of bone-setting and bleeding, undressed him and looked to his hurts. While I had been there, he had looked at me with a sort of ghastly wistfulness and appeal in his sunk eyes, clear now from their former redness, yet sad and colourless, as was his face.

When his wound was dressed, during which he fainted from weakness and loss of blood, Janet gave him some medicine she herself made from poppy-juice or flowers, which, she asserted, "would send a martyr at the stake to sleep," and, although Blount in nowise fulfilled that rôle, yet he went to sleep as soundly as a good man might. So, leaving Craig beside him for the night and a bottle of port at hand for his revival, we having done our miserable best, went all off to bed, Sir

Burleigh not a little pluming himself on his relenting.

"It was," said he, "that I did not like your tears; so think, before ever you run me into danger with your d——d weeping, whether or no you will begin. I tell you honestly—and we were Catholics once and used to confessing—that to save you a pain or a trouble I would put my hand in the fire like that recanting rascal Ridley—ay, or both hands if one would not serve."

He made up some lame story to Verney, in the morning, about having accidentally heard of Blount being at Dipcote, which he graciously accepted, as a past-master of an art will not be too hard on tyros, it being only your pretenders who are in haste to expose their adversaries' weaknesses and ignorances.

Blount was but little stronger in the morning, but exerted what force he had in the grasp he gave my hand, conveying that Janet had told him I had sent to him. It was a sorry sight to see so big a man so helpless, with very little more life than kept his heart going. Janet had relented somewhat, and was very good in her attendance on him, in intervals of cooking. Craig slept all day to be ready for night, and we had to wait on ourselves. Milord, though his con-

science did not move him much, yet felt uneasy, and required very much attention and mild treatment, by virtue of which he became more friendly to the wounded man than had we rebuked or reviled him.

"After all, it was in fair fight—fair as the world looked on such things; foul only in that Verney would not slip any chance, by word or taunt, to help disarm his adversary of self-control."

It was strange what difference the chance of death had wrought in Colonel Blount; it had clean lifted him out of that slough of self which disguised his better qualities. His face, though haggard and white, expressed now some good, though it were but gratitude and patience. Verney and he, like men of the world, met on as good terms as could be expected. Sir Burleigh looked in on him every day, with a sort of malevolent indifference—ever after his visit claiming my praise and commendation for so going against his own inclinations. M'Causland came over often to sit with him, and had to be watched lest he should talk too much about Alexis, which—and not Blount—was his object in coming at all.

Altogether the invalid had no bad time of it, considering his precarious chances at Dipcote,

and, when the summer waning left us a gold-tinted September, he was able to come out on the terrace, and lie in one of the embrasured seats, supported by cushions, and see Verney go off partridge-shooting, and watch the gleam of the distant lake through the trees, now thinning their yellow robes. It was a sweet, calm scene wherein this avenger of blood lay, lapped in peace in the midst of enemies. I read to him, sometimes from Wycherley, sometimes from the Bible, oftener from Waller, which he liked, mournfully comparing his lost Fernie Tremenheere to Sacharissa, though he would very seldom talk of her, as it too much excited him. Yet he, I knew, thought of her incessantly, and was even willing through me to beg Verney to go and see her.

"Just now," said he once, through his teeth, when Verney had passed us with his setter and gun, "Just now, when she may die for want of care and tenderness, he goes off bird-shooting. Oh, my God! what have I done in all my life to deserve this?"

The tears rolled down his face, which I wiped away for him on my soft cambric kerchief, comforting him all I could, though I felt like reminding him of the many husbands and brothers he had thus himself wronged and

robbed, and proving to him that he had met far less than his deserts in losing Fernie.

Women are born preachers, and, for ingenious ethical systems into which they can fit all cases, Procrustes was but a fool to them. In this case, however, I held my tongue, letting his own conscience work out the problem of his sins and their punishment. Justice doomed him to suffer what he had inflicted on others.

"The only ray of light in the whole cursèd business," said he, "is that she has a friend in you. Ah! for God's sake, never turn against her. She is a good girl at heart, but that tiger Clifford frightened and fascinated her." Then, relapsing into gloom and dismalness, I cheered him somewhat by stories of our walks and talks together, dwelling on her cheerfulness and mirth, which the constant poor wretch did not grudge to her, but rather was glad of. Such is true love, so self-forgetting. Here was he, in pain and misery inflicted through her, delighted with her delight, joying in her joy, and only writhing and moaning at the thought of her being neglected or uncared for.

"Ask," said he one day when the yellow leaves were floating downward by tens of thousands through the still warm air and settling on the turf, "Ask something of me, Helen Rohan, I

care not what, only let it be hard and dangerous, imperilling all I have, or prize, or hope."

"Then," said I, reflecting that it might chance so in warfare, and fully believing his earnest looks, "I ask you to respect the life you sought here; I ask that neither gold nor fame may win you to forget my now request."

"By God!" said he, "if it chance in my power to grant, and I forget your wish, I hope every curse that ever was breathed may settle on me, and fulfil itself."

"I do not mean Verney," said I uneasily.

"No, you mean Stuart; even for you I would not promise Verney's life, if ever he hurt or harm my little sweetheart." Here the poor fellow, none to the disgrace of his manhood in my eyes, shed more tears even than before, and held my hand so tight, to help suppress his sobs, that he seriously hurt it—his hands being so strong compared with mine.

"Of that I need take no oath," he said at length, reverting to his promise. "It has gone to my heart, which shall be torn out of my body ere I forget or evade the least tithe of my word to you. I am glad, too, 'tis a hard matter."

"How," said I, after a pause, "did you get so long leave?"

"My uncle," said he, "the Earl of Tyrone,

has much interest, and my regiment has been so long on active service, that there was little difficulty. I had, besides,"—here he nearly choked—"made arrangements for long leave for my marriage, which is used thus——"

"Pray leave weeping," said I, feeling my own eyes suffused, "or I must not talk with you. Sir Burleigh was angry yesterday that you had made me so sad, and you, I know, wish me no ill."

"Go on then," said he sullenly, "with Wycherley, I can bear my griefs alone," and he made a shift to turn his poor tear-stained face away. But I smoothed it softly with my hand, till he smiled and was friends again. Then we went on with "The Plain Dealer," which amused him mightily, so much of his old spirit reviving that, if I hesitated over any of the words or phrases, he begged for the book, and read them himself, with great laughs.

Craig coming with a basin of broth, I went away, not sorry for release, but observing him as I walked on the turf below the terrace.

"Sirrah," said he to Craig, after taking the broth, "can you read?"

"Ou ay!" said Craig, "read eneuch to pick my way in the Bible."

"Take this then," said the Colonel, indicating the playbook, "and go on from here."

Craig obediently stumbled over several lines, rendering them into pure Ayrshire, till, coming to a bad word, he paused.

"What the devil," said Blount, "stops you?"

"Eh! sir," said Craig, "it isna for the likes o' me to peril their souls o'er playbooks, if the quality e'en does sae. The Lord knows they are no moral eneuch to be blamed; but a gude Scot, kirk-bred, wad be e'en sair misca'd for so gaain' awa frae better knowledge. An' ye know, Colonel Blount, he that knaws richt an' does it not shall be beaten with mony stripes!"

"Then why the devil don't you read it in English?" said Blount languidly, "laying up d——n for yourself with your d——d Ayrshire drawl."

What rejoinder Craig made I don't know, as he walked off with his tray. And I, going up the steps into the hall, resisted an appealing glance Blount cast at me: I could afford him no more time for reading, as Sir Burleigh had called me, standing on the threshold with an open letter in his hand, his face dark as night.

"What is it?" said I, following him into the study.

"This!" He threw the letter on the table;

"Verney's wife has a son, and sends to me for money, saying milord spent all he had in gaming, and left her with her friends—but for whose aid she had been penniless. Her father is away in France. So, you see, I have a beggar and her brats to support, as I knew I should."

"Two," said I, "counting me. Yet you will not grudge to help her now?"

"I will not help her. Why should I? Verney has his income; if he spends it on himself, it is no more than she deserves, as she knew he would—both counting on my being fool enough to keep her—but I'm none so great a fool as that yet. I'll simply pass it on to Verney, who must have countenanced it. As barefaced a piece of beggary as ever I heard of!"

"Do not be hard on her, Sir Burleigh. We know Verney always spends everything. It is too bad of him to oblige her to this. Send her a little money."

"Not I, 'twould be a precedent. You may, if it please you," and, relenting a little, he gave me a fifty-pound bank-bill, which I enclosed in a letter, stating Sir Burleigh's anger at Verney's treatment of her, but begging her not to rely on him for the means of living, but insist, through her friends, on her husband's proper maintenance of her. This, with congratulations on her son's

birth and hopes for her welfare, I enclosed, got franked, and had posted.

"How long," sighed I that night, restless and sleepless, "am I to go about in this monstrous discomfort—in a disguise I loathe—in a state I abhor?"

Sir Burleigh and Verney were away at a far-off hamlet investigating some sheep-stealing case, and would sleep there. M'Causland had gone also.

I had no one to speak to, so, becoming more restless and unhappy, I rose and walked about, the long flame of the candle I carried flaring through the gallery. I blew it out, the grey moonlight alone showing me, ghost-like, cold, trembling in every limb. After a time I went downstairs—they seemed endless—and awoke Janet, who, hurriedly dressing, accompanied me upstairs. What after passed I scarce know, save that a child was born into the world, and I, at the point of death, weary with pain, wished it dead, that its shrill cries might not vex my dull ears, drag me back to pain and anguish.

"That will soon pass," said Janet soothingly. "You shall not hear it," and, taking it into the next room, she gave me some poppy-juice, or other sleepy stuff, under whose blessed influence I forgot everything till the midday sun awoke me.

Janet stood by, forbidding speech; she sponged my face with rosewater, however, which revived me.

"What is it?" said I, indifferently, at length.

"A beautiful blessed boy," said she, "the image of its father. Will you see him?"

"No," said I, relapsing into sleepiness, "not now." And shutting my eyes on the world, the sweet sleep-god brought me back hour by hour to renewal of strength, swiftly bearing off pain and disquiet.

Sir Burleigh did not return that day, remaining with a neighbour Jacobite. I did not miss him—everything was dreamy and vague. The large cool state-room, lit up by a wood fire in its distant hearth, was silent and pleasant. There was an infant wailing in some distant room. Janet was absent; presently she entered with the boy, who was, I could see, very handsome, with fine blue eyes, dressed up in most extravagant robes, in which it wriggled about like an eel in long clothes.

"Is that it?" said I, with languid curiosity, "why it's like me."

"Boys mostly favour their mothers," said Janet, oracle like. "I've got it a fosterer, milady—a foster mother. Bless your blue eyes, when will your father see you?"

"Ay, when?" sighed I, despondently, thinking aloud.

"He will soon be here my dear. I could na send Craig, for there is the Colonel to tend. Ay, here he comes."

"So," said Sir Burleigh coming in softly, followed by M'Causland, "So you've stole a march on us, Helen. Eh, but this is a fine fellow, M'Causland," taking the child from Janet.

"Better could na be," was the reply. "He is just pairfect, he is so truly." Sir Burleigh, after this praise, dismissed them all and sat by to watch while I slept, Janet giving him a parting order not to suffer me to talk—unnecessary, for I dozed off, awaking to find that he was gone and she herself returned.

Presently a knock came to the door.

"It is milord," said Janet, "will you see him?"

Verney came briskly in, laughing.

"Enter the disinherited!" said he. "Where is this brat?"

"Somewhere about," said I, closing my eyes, which he seemed to dazzle, or perchance, it was was the noise he made gave that feeling.

"Bring him here, Janet," he called.

"He is asleep, milord; come into the next room."

"Ay," said he, "begin with shame to take a lower place," but he followed her.

"He is a fine boy," said he, returning, "a very good addition to the Jacobites. I suppose he will follow his father's footsteps. You cannot expect me to congratulate you, Helen. Where am I now?"

I made no answer. Janet in a whisper requested him to go, and gave me some wine. As I lay watching the play of the firelight on the panelled walls, Verney's words haunted me, darting like serpents in and out of the carved wreaths of foliage, fruit, and flowers:—"A very good addition to the Jacobites."

So and similarly a few weeks passed on, witnessing a rapid recovery, helped on by so much kindness from Sir Burleigh that I felt that the bloom and glow of regained health and strength were mainly due to him.

The child soon ceased to be a novelty—in truth Janet and his country nurse monopolised him, alleging and proving against me so many charges of ignorance and incompetence in its management, that, nothing loth, except for a daily inspection, I left it to them, only stipulating that its abode should not be continually the subterranean kitchen. Even this was nearly the occasion of a civil strife, for Janet's son had been

reared there, and, according to her account, wa "the wisest, brightest, tallest of mankind." But, on this subject, though doubting nothing of her Dick's perfections, I thought free air and light the better for a Clifford, though only an honorary member of that illustrious house. Therefore a high and roomy attic was fitted up with the necessary paraphernalia, and to this Janet, in intervals of working, continually ascended by the back stairs, like a pilgrim to a shrine, or a favour-seeking courtier. And there the blue-eyed imp throve amazingly, with his rosy-cheeked foster-dame.

Verney had been induced to go off to his wife—bribed thereto. Blount lingered, almost too weak still for removal, and his meekness and quietness, besides his card-playing, made Sir Burleigh almost his friend.

All our old life resumed its way, though the consciousness of the new life above-stairs doubtless influenced it a little, imperceptibly. Still we were happy and peaceful till, hearing of Verney's returning with his wife, I counselled Blount to go.

"Not that we desire it. Believe me, we are no happier in their return than you would be."

"I will go," said Blount gloomily. "I have been granted some compensation here, Helen Rohan—milady, I mean."

I held his worn hand—hardened with much sword-practice—and felt very sorry for the big rough soldier. I would gladly enough have been spared the telling him to go from any haven where he found peace, and desired him to think so, which he avowed he did. "And you who have cared so well for my dormouse," I said, taking out the little creature from an ingenious nest of cotton, wool the Colonel had constructed. "It is but a poor return to bid you leave us."

"Take care," said Blount, with the eagerness of a boy, "not to awake him."

"I must," said I, wishing to see his black eyes open wide. So the little tawny-coated creature slowly awakened, regarding. us with prominent shining eyes from the hollow of my hand.

"It has been a distraction for me," said Blount sighing, "even to wait on a mouse you loved. Can you part with it?"

Though loath, I could not refuse it him, yet I guessed that, once more in the world, he would either kill or neglect it. Expressing this fear, he replied passionately: "Have I so many friends like you—so many who would boldly snatch a bad man from a deserved death, and never reproach him, even by a glance, for the past? So long as this little creature lives it will at least be

a living memory of your goodness to me, who am now but a wretched, lonely man."

"Take it then," I said, "and for God's sake do not imperil your restored health by careless living. I do not like to think that what has been so slowly built up, may be ruthlessly pulled down. Will you write to us?"

"Yes," he said, "but my hand is readier with arms than a pen."

"No matter for that, you have promised."

"Now," said he, "let me see your boy, that I may remember you a happy wife and mother, as poor Fernie, I fancy, is not much of either. I dread she is unhappy with that villain Clifford. Would to God they had never met, and 'twas my fault they did."

I went slowly upstairs to fetch the child, and brought him down tangling his hands in my hair, and opening his blue eyes widely to stare at Blount, who took him in his arms admiring him, as worldly men oftentimes praise what is unlikest themselves, and appreciate qualities they themselves lack.

"I should think myself happy with a son like that," he said. "He has a high-born look about him."

"New-born, you mean," I laughed, amused.

"No, I don't," he said resentfully. "Look at

the fine straight level of his brows, and the proud brightness of his eyes. I would he were mine."

"Take him too," said I, "your return to quarters with a small family, including the dormouse, would be a welcome jest to your brother soldiers."

Then, as he seemed pleased to act as nurse, we walked up and down slowly, Janet watching wistfully from a distance a signal to fetch her darling from the lions..

Too weak to ride, Blount was driven by M'Causland to meet the London coach, thirty-miles off, after a grateful parting. We all missed him, and Craig, to whom he gave a generous recompense, opined that, though he loved playbooks and was but a soldier, there were worse men than the Colonel.

Very bad times followed. Lady Clifford returned to the Manor in indifferent health, without her child, who had been placed out at nurse in the country. Verney only saw her safely installed and then went off to town, and poor Fernie, ill and feverish, tried us all every way. Lamenting, lonely, unsociable, and indolent, the whole household grew to dread her, so loudly at the least cross did she exclaim she was barbarously treated—and so in fact she was, by the separation from her child, and the contemptuous neglect of

Verney Clifford, who never even wrote to her. Blount wrote to me once or twice from Ireland, whither he had gone in command of his regiment; he mentioned the mouse as being trained by a clever sergeant of his in many ingenious tricks, and over this part of his letter I was laughing in the study when Fernie came languidly in.

"That," said she, recognizing the writing, "is from Tyrone Blount. How dare you correspond with him?"

"How dare you," I rejoined indignantly, "to mention the man you deserted and your husband nearly killed?"

"That is not the question," said she, trembling with anger. "Till you came between us we loved each other truly."

"I, madam!" said I, wonderingly, "what had I to do with parting you, who only saw you once?"

"And that once," said she in tears, "was enough. He praised you and your beauty forsooth, and your wit, and said I showed like a wooden doll beside you—till for spite I turned to Verney, who praised me. That was the first of many bickerings, in all which he taunted me with you; for he was jealous of Verney, nor had not the art to hide it, but being pained himself sought to pain me—'twas his way. So it fell out from bad

to worse, and we two wretches threw away our lives' bread for a stone."

"That was your own doing," I said, "pray leave me to my letters, I have none so much amusement that you need come with your grievous stories—I do not trouble you with my griefs, nor will not eternally listen to yours."

"You have none," said she, weeping. "You have a good husband and a host of lovers, and now you take, like the wicked wretch you are, my one ewe-lamb!"

This comparison, without my consent, threw me into a fit of laughter, which I could not control. Fernie in a fury snatched at Blount's letter, which after finishing I let her have, and she read it, and discussed it then more amicably, seeing it was but of a friendly tone and not special. So it came about that when I was writing to him, she would linger near humbly, and when it was franked would snatch up the letter and kiss it. After rebuking her a round dozen of times for this foolishness, I endeavoured to write his special letters in private, but she grew so unhappy if debarred this harmless silent message, that I let it pass, though reluctantly, dreading lest, if stopped, she should take to writing to him herself.

END OF VOL. I.

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CHAS. STRAKER AND SONS, LONDON AND REDHILL.